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SERENA.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

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AUTHOR OF THE ENGLISH NUN, &c.

" Truſt not man; he is by nature falſe,
" Diſſembling, ſubtle, cruel, and inconſtant."

OTWAY.

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SERENA.

CHAP. I.

" 'Tis but to loſe
" A few unhappy moments; 'tis to reſt
" The ſooner from my cares, to feel no more
" The bitterneſs of miſery and inſult
" That bait my weary ſoul."

MALLET.

IT has been mentioned that Sir Piercy Delville had found his heart by no means proof againſt the numberleſs attractions of Mrs. Delamain (ſo Serena appeared), at Jamaica;

and alſo that he had fortitude enough, upon making the diſcovery, to withdraw himſelf in a great meaſure from her ſociety; but there was a ſort of faſcination in the very name of the fair miſtreſs of Belleville, ſo was the villa near Kingſton called, that too often ſeduced him from what he conceived to be his duty; and he took the firſt opportunity of exchanging his preſent poſt for that of an Officer on board one of the ſhips appointed to return to Europe, who wiſhed to remain in the Weſt Indies.

In the ſoothing conſciouſneſs, ever ſo dear to an honourable mind, of having done right, Delville ſoon regained his tranquillity, and Mrs. Delamain was only thought of by him as a woman, whoſe perfections muſt render the man who had the honour to call her

her his, ſupremely happy; but, though Delville might ſometimes wiſh that he had been that man, envy had no place in his boſom.

During the ſhort time that Sir Piercy remained in England, previous to his attending his ſhip on the Halifax ſtation, a ſort of ſenſitive delicacy that he felt in his own mind regarding the lovely Serena, prevented his ever mentioning his acquaintance with her, or even repeating her name; nor did he even happen ever to hear it. But on his return from America the caſe was different: in ſeveral circles where he happened to be, the conduct of Mrs. Delamain was loudly ſpoken of for its daring impropriety, at the ſame time that her amiable

qualities were generally allowed their full merit.

Delville liſtened in ſilence to theſe accounts of a woman, whom he had conſidered as the moſt perfect of her ſex, and ſighed for the fall of Serena when Honora only was ſpoken of.

One day, a very ſhort time after his arrival from America, as Sir Piercy was ſtanding at a window, in the lodgings of a friend, he happened careleſſly to caſt his eye acroſs the ſtreet to the window of a houſe oppoſite, and was extremely aſtoniſhed to behold Serena; not leſs beautiful indeed, but leſs blooming than ſhe had been when he laſt ſaw her in Jamaica, uncloſing the ſhutters, to admit the light and warmth of the

ſun

ſun into a ſmall chamber, neatly but plainly furniſhed, in which ſat a ſick perſon reclining in an eaſy chair. Whether it was man or woman that experienced the attention of Serena he could not decide, as the high back of the chair was turned to the window; but the form of that lovely woman, as ſhe paſſed backwards and forwards to collect a thouſand little comforts for the invalid, faſcinated his attention; and it was with extreme regret that he ſaw her, in about five minutes, let down the window curtain, which ſhut the room entirely from his view.

Conſidering what had been, and what were now his thoughts of Serena, it is not wonderful that Delville continued to ruminate concerning her long after he ceaſed to behold her; and it is only truth to ſay that

it all tended to his conſideration of the poſſibility of renewing his acquaintance with her.

Sir Piercy Delville, though a moſt truly amiable young man, was not a Sir Charles Grandiſon; and though that prudent and infallible perſonage might have felt averſe again to behold a woman, ſituated as Delville imagined Serena to be, if he could have no hope of introducing her into the ſociety of Magdalens, Delville had too much of the nature of other young men, not to form very different wiſhes and deſigns.

Though when he had beheld Serena in the ſacred character of a virtuous wife, conſtituting the felicity of an amiable man, ſuch as Delamain appeared to be, he had reſolution

ſolution enough to fly beyond the reach of her attractions, and the treachery of his own feelings, he did not by any means think himſelf called upon to repeat this act of heroiſm when he a ſecond time met with her, under the circumſtances he now ſuppoſed—a falſe and fugitive wife, deſpiſing the cenſures of the world, and ſeeming to vaunt her ſhame!

But whilſt Delville was yet debating on the means of introducing himſelf to Mrs. Delamain, he could not reſiſt his deſire of ſeeing her by the ſame means he had already done; and on the next day he returned to the lodgings of his friend, who he found was not at home—a circumſtance which did not prevent him from aſcending to the dining-room,

from whence he was immediately gratified by the ſight of Serena, who was ſitting reading beſide the eaſy chair of the invalid, whom he now plainly perceived not only to be a man, but, from his dreſs, a Naval Officer. Though habited with all the careleſſneſs of illneſs, his hair was powdered, and his perſon perfectly clean: a black ſilk handkerchief ſupported his right-arm in the manner of a ſling, but his face was concealed by his left-hand.

In a few moments, however, Serena aſſiſted him to riſe and walk towards the window, when Delville diſcovered, in the pale and haggard countenance of the invalid, the intereſting features of his friend Lieutenant Hennington.

Surpriſe

Surpriſe at beholding him the companion of the imprudent Mrs. Delamain (for he had never heard that Serena was his ſiſter), or concern at his evident ill health, did not prevent Delville from immediately yielding to the firſt impulſe of his joy at finding again his former friend; and inſtantly haſtening acroſs the ſtreet, it was ſcarcely a minute before he had ſhaken hands with Hennington, enquired how he found himſelf, and aſked twenty other affectionate queſtions, concluding with a demand of whether he was comfortable and happy in his preſent ſituation.

Hennington, at this demand, glanced his eyes round the chamber, from whence Serena had already retreated, and ſighed deeply.

"You do not anſwer my enquiry, George," ſaid Delville; "and I fear you have not found ſucceſsful love an alleviation of even bodily malady."

"Succeſsful love!" repeated Henning-ton, with a ſigh deeper than the firſt, and his voice trembling from emotion, "Ah Delville! that was a bleſſing Fate ever denied to your unhappy friend.—You ſee me, Piercy," he continued with more firmneſs, "about to yield up a life upon which, I hope, I never ſet too high a value. It has often been endangered in the ſervice of my country, in which my glorious father loſt his;—partly in that cauſe will mine too be given up: and I ſhould meet the ſtroke of death with pleaſure, would my country but provide for my ſiſter, who has no dependance

on

on earth to ſecure her from poverty or ſervitude, but on me. When I am gone——"

"But you are not gone yet, my dear Hennington," interrupted Sir Piercy, aſſuming a cheerful air; "nor, I hope, will you be gone for many, many years."

"Delville," ſaid the unfortunate young man, "you know not what you wiſh me.—Though for Serena's ſake, had I liberty to die, I think I could reſolve to live; yet death will be a releaſe to me from the tortures of a broken heart!—Several years ago I thought myſelf as miſerable as man could be, becauſe the woman I adored married another; but I have felt how much keener is the pang of knowing the object we love to be infamous, than of loſing her. This,

with the unavenged wrongs and ſorrows of my ſiſter, and the anguiſh of bodily wounds, is haſtening me to the grave, and——"

Hennington's voice was interrupted by what he would have had believed a pang from his wound, for he put his hand to his ſide, and groaned; but Delville fancied it was entirely mental, and he could not be miſtaken from what followed.

"Delamain! accurſed Delamain!" cried the Lieutenant, "to thee do I owe all my miſery!"

"Delamain!" repeated Sir Pierey.

"Yes, Delville!—Honora Seward was the object of my early and ill-fated attachment. During

During one of my cruizes he obtained her hand, and I ſaw her no more for ſeveral years; when, after having long ſuppoſed her dead, I found her living in infamy, into which, but for his neglect, ſhe had never fallen!—I then left England, and remained abroad till within theſe few months, when returning to my native land to die, I found that Delamain had been the betrayer of my lovely, inexperienced ſiſter, whom, by a mockery of marriage, he had deceived!"

There was yet another cauſe for the hopeleſs miſery of the ill-fated Hennington, in the impoſſibility of his calling Mr. Delamain to account for his baſeneſs; but he was too noble to mention it then.

Delville

Delville was not long unacquainted with his miſtake concerning Serena; and between the day on which his recognition of Lieutenant Hennington took place, and that which terminated the exiſtence of that gallant but unfortunate Officer, he was entruſted, under a promiſe of ſecrecy, with the whole of Serena's ſtory; and appointed her guardian by her brother, even in his expiring moments. It is now needleſs to relate more, ſince the reſt may be eaſily conceived.

Miſs Hennington became every day more beloved by Sir Piercy and his family, and more melancholy, till ſhe at length prevailed upon herſelf to write to her guardian, entreating him to procure her a more private aſylum,

aſylum, leaving it to him to gueſs the motive of her requeſt.

The circumſtance of her pregnancy, which Sir Piercy had all along too much dreaded not to expect, ſeemed to confirm him miſerable for life. He knew that Mr. Delamain had at length procured a divorce from Honora; and though he hoped, at the ſame time that his generoſity made him fear, that he was beloved by Serena, he doubted whether he would not be culpable in ſeeking to divide her from the father of her child. Only one hope remained for him—it was that the infant might not live to ſee the light; but, as it proved a thriving child, he took the reſolution of abandoning his country for ever, as he entertained no hope that the delicate ſcruples of Serena to become his

his wife, would be weakened by her having conſtantly in her ſight ſuch a memento of her diſgrace.

When, on the memorable evening of his farewel viſit to Serena, he met Mr. Delamain at the cottage, his indignation againſt that gentleman knew no bounds, and though naturally the moſt courteous of men, he did not ſcruple to inſult him without any apparent provocation; but feeling towards him the moſt decided abhorrence, and his mind in a tumult from various and agonizing emotions, it is not aſtoniſhing that the impetuous and naturally irritable ſpirit of Sir Piercy broke forth.

What followed? The entrance of Serena herſelf, too much agitated to be clearly underſtood

ſtood by Delville. He only retained, on leaving the cottage, an idea of determined animoſity to Delamain; and, had not his gentle ſiſter prevented his purpoſe, the earlieſt dawn of day would have ſeen one, or both the lovers of Serena, a breathleſs corpſe.

CHAP. II.

DURING the early part of the night, Miſs Delville's thoughts were too buſy to permit her to attempt ſleeping; but towards the morning ſhe fell into a ſlumber, which ſhe was ſtill enjoying when Mrs. Powis entered her room, and undrew the curtains of her bed. Aſtoniſhed at the appearance of that lady, who ſeldom roſe till a very late hour, Miſs Delville demanded if breakfaſt was over; to which her couſin replied in the negative,

negative, at the ſame time ſeating herſelf on the bedſide.

"My deareſt Philippa muſt certainly," began the fair widow, but her voice faltered, and it was not till ſhe had coughed ſeveral times that ſhe was able to continue, "muſt certainly, long ſince, have perceived the partiality—the attachment conceived for her by Xavier—I mean the Count de Melanville."

Mrs. Powis bluſhed even to a painful degree as ſhe made this little correction; and her confuſion left her couſin at liberty to reply.

"You know, Emily," ſaid ſhe, "that I have always deſpiſed affectation and trifling upon

upon a ſubject of this nature, and I will therefore own that I have often obſerved traits of the partiality you mention; but, as I have more than one reaſon againſt giving it any encouragement, I was not without hope that he would have, long ere this, conquered a feeling ſo inimical to his own repoſe, and ſo entirely fruitleſs in its preſent object."

Mrs. Powis fancied that Philippa laid a particular emphaſis on the word preſent, and bluſhed, and heſitated as ſhe ſaid—

"But if he has not done ſo?"

"I am ſorry for it," returned Miſs Delville.

There

There was a calmneſs in the manner of Miſs Delville, that ſomewhat re-aſſured the trembling Emily, who dreaded nothing ſo much as the ſucceſs of her miſſion, and with leſs agitation ſhe reſumed—

"You muſt pardon me, couſin, if I take a part in this buſineſs, that you may probably think I had done more wiſely had I declined, more eſpecially as I was not deſired——I mean, I was not poſitively requeſted by either party to undertake it;—but you know my friendſhip for the Count de Melanville, and as you cannot doubt my affection for yourſelf, you muſt—you muſt—I would ſay that you——"

Mrs. Powis had by this time ſo completely puzzled herſelf in her oratory, that ſhe

ſhe was obliged to come to an abrupt concluſion; and though Miſs Delville ſincerely pitied her confuſion, ſince ſhe was no ſtranger to the ſentiments that cauſed it, ſhe could not refrain from ſmiling. This increaſed the embarraſſment of the fair widow; but the generous purpoſe of her heart ſoon prevailed over its weakneſs, and ſhe pleaded the cauſe of De Melanville to her lovely couſin with energy and animation.

"Will you, Emily," ſaid Miſs Delville, "allow me to enquire if what you have ſaid was at the requeſt of the Count?"

"How can you ſuppoſe, Philippa, that it was?—Ah no! you well know the keen ſenſe he entertains of his preſent unfortunate ſituation; and if you had the regard for him which

which he merits, you could not for a moment imagine that he would declare his attachment to the only daughter of Lord Somerſet."

"Then it is evident, my dear Emily, that I have not that regard for him which I ought to have for the man whoſe addreſſes I would encourage. The motive of my enquiry I need not explain, but it was not one unfavourable to the Count, who I am truly ſorry ſhould have formed an attachment to me, ſince I cannot ſuppoſe that my father would approve of it, even if I did."

"You miſtake," returned Mrs. Powis; "there is nothing my uncle ſo much wiſhes as your union with his eſtimable young friend. Had I not known this, I ſhould, when

when he laſt night made me the confidante of his paſſion, have informed him that his love was hopeleſs."

"And does he know of your preſent pleadings for him?" enquired Miſs Delville.

"He does not, upon my honour.—When fortune is ſo vaſtly ſuperior on the ſide of the woman, I think it is her buſineſs to ſpeak firſt."

"I am perfectly of your opinion," returned Philippa; "but at preſent, dear Emily, it cannot be; for though I eſteem, I cannot love the Count."

Mrs.

Mrs. Powis now retired, by no means diſpleaſed with the event of her application to her couſin; and that young lady prepared immediately to attend the breakfaſt-table.

This was one of thoſe very few mornings that the Count did not join the ladies at breakfaſt; and, to the unſpeakable diſtreſs of Miſs Delville, Sir Piercy was alſo abſent. When ſhe found, after waiting ſome time, that he did not appear, ſhe rung for a ſervant, of whom ſhe enquired concerning her brother; but heard only that he had, at a very early hour, walked out.

Miſs Delville ſhuddered at this intelligence; ſhe doubted not whither he had gone, and dreaded the effects of a meeting

between two ſo proud and iraſcible ſpirits as his and Delamain's.

After liſtening for ſome time to the ſurmiſes of Mrs. Powis, concerning the meaning of Delville's early and long ramble, with tolerable patience, Philippa, unable longer to endure a ſtate of ſuſpenſe, left the breakfaſt-room, and haſtened to the ſtudy, to ſee if her brother's piſtols remained where they uſually hung. They did ſo, and his ſword ſtill was ſuſpended above them. This in ſome meaſure relieved her apprehenſions, till ſhe ſuddenly recollected that Sir Piercy made it a rule never to ſleep without fire-arms in his chamber, and that at his bed's-head hung another caſe of piſtols.

Upon

Upon examination, ſhe found that thoſe had diſappeared, and ſhe no longer doubted the fatal purpoſe of his going abroad ſo early. With a horror not to be deſcribed, ſhe now recollected the anſwer he had made the night before, when ſhe had requeſted to hear the whole of Miſs Hennington's hiſtory, and his intimation that on the morrow there might be more events to communicate. Though at the time Miſs Delville had not heeded this remark, it now appeared of infinite importance, and ſhe would immediately have ſent meſſengers in purſuit of her brother, could ſhe have formed any probable gueſs whither he was gone, ſince ſhe had no clue to guide her to Delamain, with whom ſhe doubted not he might be found.

Diſtracted with apprehenſion, Philippa now firſt recollected the propriety of applying to De Melanville in the preſent emergency; ſince, as he was already in the confidence of Sir Piercy, he was the moſt likely perſon to diſcover him, and to prevent miſchief between him and Mr. Delamain; at the ſame time that, ſhould her fears prove groundleſs, the ſecret of the unhappy Serena would not be betrayed.

The mind of Miſs Delville was too juſtly attempered, her ſpirits were too mildly equal for her ever to feel thoſe violent emotions which overturn prudence and reaſon; and ſhe was at this time ſufficiently herſelf to remember that, ſhould ſhe permit the Count to reach the caſtle before ſhe ſpoke to him, ſhe muſt either give up all hope of procuring

his

his assistance in her distress, or run the disagreeable risk of having the whole affair known to Mrs. Powis; and therefore she instantly left the house, and took her way along the horse-road, to the village where he lived, to meet him, as she doubted not he would soon arrive. She did not, however, meet him; and she had reached the turn to the path leading to Serena's habitation, when she recollected that it was his constant custom to call there every day, on his way to the castle; at the same time that it struck her, as a probable means of relieving her inquietude, to enquire if Mr. Delamain was now at the cottage.

She accordingly hastened thither, and learned from the woman of the house, two very unpleasant circumstances: one, that

no gentleman had been there that morning; the other, that young Madam was, ſhe did believe, in a fever; and that little maſter was, ſure enough, bad in the ſmall-pox.

The moment Miſs Delville heard of Serena's indiſpoſition, ſhe flew to her chamber, and found her totally unconſcious of every thing around her. The cold ſhe had caught the night before by walking in the damp, and the agitation of her mind, had already ſhewn their baleful effects on her delicate and enfeebled conſtitution, and ſhe was, as the woman ſaid, in a fever; but one of ſo low a kind, notwithſtanding her delirium, as promiſed to ſet its criſis at a conſiderable diſtance. Finding her friend entirely incapable of ſpeaking to, or even knowing her, Philippa next viſited the little

little boy, on whoſe body the ſmall-pox had made its appearance in many places, but whoſe life did not appear in any danger, as a nurſe had already been provided for him, whoſe own infant had died the day before.

As the worthy Mrs. Barton ſtill remained at the cottage, and Miſs Delville's aſſiſtance was, ſhe found, not neceſſary, ſhe now took her leave of the place till the next day, giving the ſtricteſt charge that ſhe might be ſummoned, ſhould any extraordinary circumſtance take place before that time.

Miſs Delville now ſlowly and heavily walked homeward, expecting every moment to be overtaken by the Count; but he came not; and on entering the park, ſhe repaired to a ſeat under a large aſh-tree, which com-

manded a view of the road, to watch for his arrival. But either her attention relaxed, or her wiſhes were counteracted by the Count coming another way; for, in about half an hour, the voice of De Melanville ſtruck her ears, at ſome diſtance behind her, ſpeaking, as it appeared, to Mrs. Powis.

"You muſt pardon my abſence, my faireſt friend," ſaid he, "ſince it was occaſioned by my *rencontre* with a friend, whom I have not ſeen for ſome years."

"Where did you meet this friend?" enquired Mrs. Powis.

"At Skipton," replied the Count, "whither I went, at an early hour this morning, to enquire for letters."

"And

"And you have been with your new-found friend ever ſince?" ſaid the widow.

"Not abſolutely ſo, neither. Mr. Delamain, who was the perſon I mentioned, left me ſoon after we met, promiſing to return to the inn, and breakfaſt with me at ten o'clock; but though I waited till twelve before I left Skipton, he had not then returned; and I probably ſhall not ſee him any more."

From the commencement of this ſpeech, Miſs Delville would have imagined that the Count was a ſtranger to the intentions of Mr. Delamain, but his laſt words ſeemed to imply his knowledge that he was gone hoſtilely to meet Delville; yet ſtill, that a man who poſſeſſed ſo large a ſhare of feeling as

De Melanville, ſhould ſpeak with ſo much apparent compoſure, when in doubt whether the fates of two perſons, whom he called his friends, might not at that moment be fatally deciding, was more than ſhe could reconcile to her own mind; and as the preſence of Mrs. Powis precluded any converſation with the Count of a private nature, Miſs Delville took the firſt opportunity of ſtealing unobſerved from her ſeat, and haſtening to her own apartment, where ſhe threw herſelf into a chair, in an agony of ſuſpenſe and apprehenſion.

This continued till a ſervant ſummoned her to dinner; and, convinced of the neceſſity of exertion, ſhe deſcended the ſtairs, and was paſſing through the hall to the dining-parlour, when ſhe beheld her brother ſlowly,

and

and with a dejected countenance, aſcending the ſteps of the hall-door. She flew to him—

"Oh Piercy!" cried ſhe, in a low voice, "how miſerable has your abſence this morning rendered me!—Tell me, I entreat you, where you have been."

"At Skipton."

"Good Heavens! for what purpoſe?" enquired the trembling Philippa.

"On particular buſineſs," replied Sir Piercy, "which will occaſion me to leave this place to-night."

"Ah Delville!" exclaimed his ſiſter, in an agony, and ſeizing his arm to ſupport herſelf, "I fear—to leave England!"

Sir Piercy turned from her as he anſwered, in a tone of diſtreſs—

"I muſt indeed fly from this now hated country!"

Philippa, reſting her head againſt one of the pillars of the portico, ſighed and ſhuddered; ſhe, however, in a few moments gained ſufficient command over her feelings to follow her brother into the dining-room without betraying any violent emotion.

During the whole time of dinner, dejection ſat on the countenances of every one preſent,

preſent, though from different reaſons; and the ſilence was uninterrupted, not only whilſt the meal laſted, but for ſome time afterwards. Sir Piercy then roſe from the table, and ſlightly mentioning his deſign to ſet out for London that evening, deſired to ſpeak a few words to De Melanville in the ſtudy as ſoon as might be convenient. The Count bowed, and inſtantly attended him from the apartment.

"What can Piercy be about?" exclaimed Mrs. Powis, with a face of wonder and curioſity.

"I know not," Miſs Delville replied, faintly; for the exertions ſhe had made to appear tranquil, had almoſt overcome her ſpirits,

ſpirits, and it was with ſome difficulty ſhe refrained from tears.

"I would give my ears to know what buſineſs he has with the Count, that the invitation to a private conference was ſo ſolemnly given," reſumed Mrs. Powis, whoſe curioſity was inſatiable; "one would ſuppoſe, from his manner, that Piercy had committed a murder, and wanted to confide it to his friend."

This thoughtleſs ſpeech, in which there appeared not only truth but deſign, totally vanquiſhed the feeble reſolution of Miſs Delville; ſhe covered her face with her hands, and reſting them on the table, fell into a violent paſſion of tears.

Mrs.

Mrs. Powis, alarmed beyond meaſure at this ſudden emotion of her couſin, firſt begged to know why ſhe wept, and then attempted to reaſon with her; but the arguments of Mrs. Powis were too weak to make any impreſſion, and ſhe had then recourſe to the beſt remedy in ſuch caſes, and pouring ſome water into a glaſs, almoſt forced it down Miſs Delville's throat: this, and the momentary indulgence ſhe had given to her tears, in ſome degree relieved Philippa, and ſhe looked up in the face of her couſin as if to thank her for her attention; but again, vanquiſhed by the acuteneſs of her feelings, ſhe concealed her face, and wept aloud.

"Philippa, my deareſt girl," exclaimed Mrs. Powis, "for Heavèn's ſake, tell me what it is that thus afflicts you!—I fear that

that Piercy has received ſome ill news of my uncle, and has communicated it to you."

"No, no," ſaid Miſs Delville, almoſt inarticulately, "there has been no ill news, Emily, indeed."

"Why then do I ſee you thus agitated?"

"I don't know—it is nothing—I am only fatigued," ſobbed Miſs Delville, riſing to go to her own chamber. Mrs. Powis wiſhed to accompany her, but ſhe conjured her to let her go alone, and Emily at length complied with a requeſt, which ſeemed as perplexing to her as every thing elſe had done for the laſt hour.

With difficulty did Miſs Delville reach her own room, and ſitting down, ſhe gave way to all the dreadful ideas that ruſhed on her mind:—ſhe fancied ſhe beheld the diſfigured corpſe of the once handſome, elegant Delamain, and her brother mourning for having been the inſtrument of his deſtruction, whilſt he rejoiced that he could no more perſecute or betray.—The unfortunate Serena next became the object of her thoughts: ſhe ſaw her, her tenderneſs for Delamain reviving with her pity for his untimely fate, weeping over her orphan babe, and lamenting at the ſame time the exile of her much-loved Delville; ſhe fancied ſhe beheld her unhappy friend ſtruggling with her fondneſs for Sir Piercy, which prompted her to give a father to her boy in the man who had deſtroyed his real parent, and at laſt

laſt ſinking, broken-hearted, to the grave, or confirmed in madneſs!

Thoſe dreadful images had nearly overwhelmed the reaſon of the gentle Philippa, when ſuddenly recollecting that it was poſſible Mr. Delamain might yet live (though it was neceſſary for Delville to quit England, in caſe of the worſt happening), ſhe ſtarted up, and was flying to the ſtudy to her brother, when ſhe met him on the ſtairs, preceding his own ſervant, who was carrying an empty portmanteau to his maſter's room.

Regardleſs of the preſence of Peter, Miſs Delville threw her arms round Sir Piercy's neck, ſaying in a low voice, as ſhe embraced him—

"Tell

"Tell me, I conjure you, Delville, is he yet dead?"

"Would to God that I were!" exclaimed Sir Piercy, with a groan of anguiſh.

"Oh Piercy!" ſighed his ſiſter, adding, "but does Delamain live?"

"He does;—but do not detain me, my ſiſter; I muſt haſten from hence.—Xavier will tell you all."

Delville kiſſed her cheek as he ſpoke, and hurried away, whilſt Philippa went in ſearch of the Count; but he was not in the houſe, and ſhe returned in as great ſuſpenſe as ever to her chamber.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

AN hour elapſed, and though Miſs Delville anxiouſly liſtened to hear the voice of the Count below ſtairs, ſhe could diſtinguiſh no ſound but the paſſing and repaſſing of the men-ſervants through the gallery, as the two extremities of which were her brother's chamber and her own, and afterwards the creeking of ropes, and the heavy lumbering noiſes attending the cording of large trunks: from this ſhe drew a painful certainty of the length of the journey about to be undertaken

taken by Sir Piercy, and the probable term of his abſence, and wept.

She was interrupted, however, in her ſorrowful contemplations by a knock at her door; and inſtantly opening it, ſhe perceived her brother equipped for travelling, and Peter ſtanding behind him, booted and ſpurred, with a large dreſſing-caſe in his hand, ſeeming to wait the concluſion of ſome directions his maſter had been giving him.

As ſoon as Philippa uncloſed the door, Sir Piercy ceaſed to ſpeak to Peter, and returned with his ſiſter into her chamber.

"I am juſt upon the wing, Philippa," ſaid he, in a calmer tone than he had laſt addreſſed

addreſſed her, "and can only devote a moment to adieus.—Heaven bleſs you, my beloved ſiſter!" he continued, embracing her tenderly, "and let me conjure you, by every thing ſacred, to keep the ſecret of Serena inviolable.—Time will unfold every thing; but promiſe me that you will be ſilent on the ſubject till it does."

Miſs Delville was bathed in tears, but ſhe promiſed in a voice ſcarcely articulate; and Sir Piercy, repeating his bleſſing, haſtily left her, too much affected to notice by more than an inclination of her head, the affectionate "God proſper you, Miſs!" of old Peter Phelan, Sir Piercy's Hibernian attendant, who now followed his maſter down ſtairs.

When

When Miſs Delville was a little more compoſed than immediately on the departure of her brother, ſhe was preparing to join her couſin below, when the houſe-maid came in to put her room in order for the night :—of this girl ſhe enquired if the Count were in the houſe, and learning that he was in the library with Madam Powis, ſhe changed her mind as to going down ſtairs; and deſiring the houſe-maid to bring her a light, ſat down by the fire to indulge her dejection.

She had not remained long in this ſituation, and the maid had not yet brought the light, when ſhe heard a carriage drive up to the hall-door, on the ſame ſide of the houſe with which were the windows of her apartment. That which conveyed Sir Piercy had

had been gone ſome time; and curioſity, which, it is ſaid, nothing can ſtifle in the breaſt of woman, induced her to go to the window, from whence ſhe perceived, by the light proceeding from the windows and the open hall-door, that the poſtillions wore her own family livery; and the next moment ſhe beheld Lord Somerſet alight from the carriage, followed by a gentleman, whom, in deſpite of the clear evidence of her ſenſes, ſhe could ſcarcely believe to be the Chevalier Bayar. But, notwithſtanding Miſs Delville's doubts, the very idea that it was the accompliſhed Swede, of whom, during his abſence, ſhe had thought ſo much, prevented her flying down ſtairs, as ſhe was at firſt going to do, to embrace her father. But the meeting was not long delayed; for, in a minute or two, Lord Somerſet himſelf

entered

entered the room, and preſſed her to his boſom.

"My dear Sir," exclaimed ſhe, "how little did I think of ſeeing you here; and how much will Piercy be diſappointed at not meeting you."

"Why, is he not in the caſtle?" enquired Lord Somerſet.

Miſs Delville related that he had departed for London only an hour before; and her father then ſaid, with a ſigh—

"Poor boy! he is conſcious, I ſee, and wiſhes to avoid his parent."

Philippa was ſurpriſed; but ſhe remained ſilent, and his Lordſhip reſumed.

"You muſt come down ſtairs, my love, and welcome our amiable gueſt, the Chevalier Bayar, whom I have brought from town with me."

Lord Somerſet took her hand, and they deſcended to the library together; there they found the delighted Mrs. Powis almoſt overwhelming the Chevalier with her flattering expreſſions of joy at ſeeing him; but the moment Miſs Delville appeared, he quitted her couſin, and advanced to her. Their greetings were mutually kind; but Philippa fancied that the manner of the Chevalier was leſs animated than it had formerly been whenever he addreſſed her, and a

ſigh

ſigh ſtole from her boſom as ſhe made the obſervation.

Mrs. Powis now began to aſk a thouſand queſtions of her uncle, which he might have been perplexed to find anſwers to, had not the lady very benevolently ſpared him the trouble of replying to above one in ten, by the unremitting volubility with which ſhe aſked them.

Miſs Delville took this opportunity of drawing the Count de Melanville to a diſtant part of the room, where ſhe demanded from him the explanation promiſed by Sir Piercy, concerning the events of the laſt ſixteen hours, and not only them, but the part of Serena's ſtory with which ſhe was unacquainted, and which her brother had

given her to underſtand was now known to the Count.

The ſtory of Serena has, however, been detailed, and a clearer narrative of the events of the morning than De Melanville was enabled to give, will be more ſatisfactory than repeating the tale as he told it.

The night following his rencounter with Mr. Delamain, at the cottage of Serena, Delville attempted not to ſleep; he did not even lie down, but ſpent the hours till daylight ſometimes in traverſing his chamber, and ſometimes in the gloomy ſtillneſs of deep rumination; but his mind ſcarcely enjoyed the quiet of a ſingle moment, ſo occupied was this unhappy young man in reconciling what he conceived to be his duties, and in

ſtruggling

ſtruggling to attain that cool fortitude which he knew would be ſo neceſſary in the interview that he determined ſhould take place as ſoon as there was light enough to enable him to go in ſearch of Mr. Delamain.

As he had reſolved not to incur any enquiries being made by his family concerning his abſence, he went out on foot about five in the morning, taking with him his piſtols; and deſigning to walk over to Skipton, near four miles off, where he doubted not he ſhould, by making enquiries, find Mr. Delamain. He was not deſtined, however, to a long ſearch, for within about a mile of Skipton he met that gentleman's groom, who informed him of the name of the inn where his maſter had ſlept the night before.

Delville then repaired to another inn in the neighbourhood, from whence he ſent a note to Mr. Delamain, requeſting him to name any hour when he might have the honour of ſeeing him. Mr. Delamain wrote back word that in half an hour he would wait on him; and Delville waited the appointed time in the moſt painful impatience.

Mr. Delamain at length appeared, and as ſoon as he had ſaluted Delville, took his piſtols from his pocket, and laid them on a table.

"Be not alarmed, Sir Piercy," ſaid he.

"Alarmed, Sir!" repeated Delville haſtily, and colouring.

Mr.

Mr. Delamain ſmiled, and continued—

"My intentions are pacific."

"You approach hoſtilely, Mr. Delamain, notwithſtanding," ſaid Delville; "but though not prepared for an immediate rencounter, I alſo am armed."

As he was ſpeaking, he laid his piſtols by thoſe of Mr. Delamain; and having done ſo, walked diſturbedly up and down the room for ſome minutes, whilſt Mr. Delamain, with the moſt eaſy *nonchalance* imaginable, talked to a little dog that had followed him into the room. Delville felt his anger rapidly riſing at this foolery, and at length in a voice of ſmothered indignation, he thus addreſſed his opponent—

"Your patience, Mr. Delamain, is, I fear, almoſt exhauſted in awaiting an explanation of the motive that made me deſire your company here; but I bluſh not to avow that I have not yet been able ſo far to diveſt myſelf of every generous feeling of the heart, as to conſider with ſtoical apathy, or to treat either with levity or coldneſs, events and circumſtances that have already proved ſo diſtreſſing, and which promiſe to terminate fatally."

Delville pauſed, for the conflicting emotions of his mind had rendered the laſt words he had ſpoken almoſt unintelligible, and tried to recollect himſelf. Mr. Delamain, however, ſpoke not, though he had liſtened with attention, interrupted only by the paſtime of pulling and ſtroking the ears of the ſpaniel, which

which had now placed itſelf on a chair next to the one he occupied. Delville, after ſome moments had elapſed, thus continued—

" During a night of ſleepleſs rumination, I have tried to reconcile feeling and propriety in the regulation of my conduct, and I hope I have ſucceeded. I have endeavoured to diveſt myſelf of thoſe tender ſenſibilities which my attachment to Miſs Hennington has rooted in my heart, and to conſider myſelf only as the repreſentative of my much-injured friend, who, even in the very moment when he was expiring, committed to me the ſacred truſt of his ſiſter's happineſs and honour. At the time when I accepted the charge, a promiſe was extorted from me that I would not ſeek to

avenge her wrongs, unleſs ſhe was again moleſted by the author of them; but the reſtriction extended no farther, and I am now free——"

"To puniſh what you pleaſe to term my baſeneſs," added Mr. Delamain, with the moſt perfect *ſang froid*; "but, Sir Piercy, though I have confeſſed my errors, I would have you underſtand that my penance is not to be preſcribed by you.—Atonement I am willing to make to Miſs Hennington, whom I have injured; but it is not the lover of that lady who ſhall decide whether ſhe ſhall accept of it."

Delville felt his blood boiling at what he eſteemed the cool inſolence of Delamain, nd it was with the utmoſt difficulty that

he could refrain from interrupting him; but the moment he made a pauſe—

"As the lover of Miſs Hennington, Sir," ſaid he, "I am willing to allow the impropriety of my interference; but as her guardian, as the repreſentative of Lieutenant Hennington, whoſe ſufferings your perfidy to his ſiſter augmented to an overwhelming degree, I feel myſelf authorized to forbid all intercourſe between you and my ward, of which I am not the medium. Whilſt a ſenſe of honour, whilſt a veneration of truth and virtue glow in my heart, it will ever feel repugnant to holding any intercourſe with you; and were I not conſcious that all my hopes of happineſs reſt in the approbation of Miſs Hennington, and that therefore my conduct is ſubject to falſe inferences, I

ſhould declare, once for all, that while my power over her, as her guardian, had exiſtence, ſhe ſhould never hold communication with the man whoſe villany has ſullied her reputation, blaſted her peace of mind, and contributed to rob her of an only brother."

"Your expreſſions are rather more than harſh, Sir Piercy," ſaid Mr. Delamain, angrily, "and rather leſs than juſt."

"To penetrate marble, Mr. Delamain, we uſe rough methods," replied Delville; "but if you think I do you leſs than juſtice, I am ready to repair my fault, and characterize you as I ought—as a falſe and treacherous friend!—as a deep, deſigning libertine, devoid of honour, principle, and feeling!—whoſe very vices are ſyſtematic, and

and the coolneſs of whoſe head well ſeconds the frozen depravity of his heart!"

However juſtly Sir Piercy's laſt words might have applied to Mr. Delamain, he was ſtill but a man, and a proud one; nor was it in nature, however merited, patiently to endure ſo violent an attack as that which Delville had made on his character, for every thing dear to honour and humanity.

"My heart muſt be frozen indeed," cried he, with furious reſentment in his generally placid countenance, and graſping one of his piſtols, "it muſt ceaſe to beat before I can forgive ſuch inſults!—Sir Piercy, the life of one of us is forfeited, and let Fortune decide which of us is to die!"

"If

"If you are determined to put it to the teſt, Mr. Delamain," replied Sir Piercy, "the victim is already fixed, for I will not accept your challenge.—I am ſenſible that there are certain truths that none but a coward will bear to hear; and I am conſcious, at the ſame time, that I have given you unpardonable provocation, and that your courage is not ſo queſtionable as your principles."

Mr. Delamain, though enraged at the conduct of Delville in the firſt inſtance, could not be inſenſible to his generoſity in the laſt: he daſhed the piſtol he had taken from the table, furiouſly from his hand on the floor, and advancing to Delville, ſaid, with emotion—

"Sir

"Sir Piercy, why can we not be friends?"

"Becauſe I will never give my hand in amity to a man, whoſe actions excite my abhorrence," anſwered Delville, firmly.

"But when thoſe actions are repented of——" Mr. Delamain began.

"I can ceaſe to be your enemy; but never—never be your friend!" returned Sir Piercy, with energy.

"Sir Piercy Delville, you treat me like a truant child," cried the diſſatisfied Delamain. "You appear to think me even beneath your contempt."

"Aſk

"Aſk your own heart, Mr. Delamain, what you have deſerved from every man of honour, to whom the tale of the Henningtons is known, and if I wrong you, deſpiſe my injuſtice."

"Incomprehenſible young man!" exclaimed Mr. Delamain, involuntarily.

Never, in truth, had that gentleman met with a character ſimilar to that of his preſent companion—never had he known one of ſo candid, ſo generous a diſpoſition as Sir Piercy's, who, in the enthuſiaſm of a moment, would not forego his ſtern abhorrence of vice, or at leaſt of its votaries, ſo far as to abſtain from reproofs. But Delville had a firmneſs of character rarely to be met with, though its ſemblance is often found

found in the opiniated obſtinacy of young men, who either poſſeſs a conſciouſneſs of ſuperior talents and underſtanding, or have been perſuaded by their friends into an opinion of their own ſagacity. Mild and tractable to thoſe he loved, of an unbending ſpirit to thoſe whom he deſpiſed or diſliked, was Sir Piercy Delville; and Mr. Delamain, whilſt he felt irreſiſtibly impelled to ſeek his friendſhip, could not but ſee that Sir Piercy never would accord it. He had waited upon Delville at the inn with peace in his looks, but rancour at his heart. The caſe was now reverſed; for while his countenance plainly evinced the agitation of his mind, he could not help according the juſtice of admiration to his adverſary.

" Sir

"Sir Piercy," ſaid he, at length, "I am willing to ſhew the reſpect due to your office of guardian to Miſs Hennington, and will therefore refrain from ſeeing or writing to her till ſhe is of age.—I think you have too much honour to take advantage of my reſolution, at the ſame time that I know your determination never to be my friend, on that, or on any other occaſion.—It is your intention, I hear, to leave England, for active ſervice in another country; it is alſo mine. Your connections lead you towards Sweden; mine draw me towards Ruſſia; and, ſhould the chance of a war ever cauſe us to meet in fight, our enmity muſt not be forgotten."

"Periſh the thought!" exclaimed the indignant Delville, "the baſe, the unworthy

thy idea!—Vile is he who mingles the paltry ſentiment of private reſentment, with the generous ardour of national conteſt!—No, Sir; ſhould I be deſtined to meet you in the warfare of kingdoms, aſſure yourſelf I ſhall avoid you; but I no longer refuſe to meet you openly on the grounds of private quarrel. Come then, Sir, I attend you, to avenge, if Heaven fails me not, the wrongs of Serena."

Sir Piercy's invitation was delivered with the proud ſternneſs of inſulted honour, and in half an hour afterwards, when the parties had walked to the diſtance of a mile from the town, a *rencontre* took place, in which Mr. Delamain was wounded; and Sir Piercy leaving him to the care of his ſervant, who had

had been a witneſs of his fall, returned home to prepare for his journey.

CHAP. IV.

EARLY on the morning ſucceeding her father's return to the caſtle, Miſs Delville ſet out, as ſhe had been accuſtomed, to viſit the unfortunate and ſecluded Serena; but was at once aſtoniſhed and diſappointed to meet Lord Somerſet himſelf on foot, and evidently returning from the cottage, as the path he was in did not lead to any other place: his air was thoughtful, and his coun-

tenance

tenance wore an expreſſion of melancholy diſturbance that afflicted the affectionate Philippa, though ignorant whence it aroſe.

Lord Somerſet, when he had replied to her enquiries concerning his health, aſked her whither ſhe was going? and ſeeing that ſhe bluſhed and heſitated, ſaid—

"Secrecy, my child, may be commendable; but nothing can authorize diſſimulation."

The mildneſs of this rebuke, united with the conſciouſneſs that it was merited, made the eyes of Miſs Delville fill with tears; but her father forbore to notice them, and drawing her arm within his own, made her walk back with him the way ſhe came.

They

They had proceeded near a quarter of a mile before either again ſpoke, and Lord Somerſet then breaking the long ſilence, ſaid—

"Do you know with what intention Piercy's ſudden journey was undertaken?"

"I do, my Lord," ſhe replied; "he certainly meant to ſee your Lordſhip."

"Ah no, Philippa!" returned the venerable Peer, the native and long cheriſhed dignity of his manner ſinking into mild ſadneſs, "he did not intend to meet me.—Your brother, even now, would ſhun rather than ſeek thoſe whom his conduct has rendered miſerable."

"Even

"Even now!" cried Miſs Delville, echoing the emphaſis laid on thoſe words by her father; "Ah my Lord! of what is it that you ſuſpect my brother?"

"Philippa," he anſwered, "I do not ſuſpect any thing: I am ſadly convinced."

"Of what, my dear Sir?—What has Piercy done?"

"Betrayed the truſt repoſed in him by an expiring friend!" replied Lord Somerſet, in a voice in which anguiſh and reſentment ſeemed mingled with ſhame.

"Depend on it, my Lord, you wrong him by ſuch an opinion," cried Miſs Delville, warmly.

"Impoſ-

"Impoſſible! Did I not but juſt now behold a witneſs of his crime?—Ah Philippa! your brother is the ſeducer of Miſs Hennington!—My information cannot be doubted."

"It may be erroneous, my Lord," ſaid Miſs Delville timidly, and fearing to break her promiſe.

His Lordſhip looked ſternly at his daughter for a moment or two, and then ſaid—

"Tell me, child, for I know you are acquainted with her preſent ſituation—tell me, on your honour, do you not know Serena to be ſtill unmarried?"

Miſs

Miſs Delville reluctantly replied in the affirmative; and Lord Somerſet then drawing a letter from his pocket, gave it to her to read, ſaying—

"Peruſe that; and if it is in your power to diſprove any of its contents, do ſo at once, and clear your brother of the charge of baſeneſs."

Philippa took the letter, at the ſame time ſhe was conſcious that, let it contain what falſehoods it might, ſhe muſt not attempt to prove them ſuch; and read the following lines:—

"MY LORD,

"It is with extreme pain that I find myſelf under the neceſſity of diſtreſſing your

Lordſhip by unfolding to you not only the youthful errors, but the depravity of the maturer years of your ſon. Sir Piercy Delville, my Lord, merits not the honour of having ſuch a parent; and, by the time you have peruſed this letter, I think you will ceaſe to glory in your heir.

" It is an unpleaſant taſk, my Lord, to be obliged to expoſe one's own weakneſs to ſo reſpectable a perſonage as your Lordſhip; but my wrongs can no longer be concealed, and the diſcloſure of them may ſave another from as complete deſtruction as has been brought on me.

" The perſon who has the honour to addreſs your Lordſhip, is the only daughter of a Roman Catholic gentleman of conſiderable property

property in Ireland; and from her having been brought up in the tenets of that faith, are, perhaps, all her misfortunes owing.—About six years ago, you must remember your son obtaining your permission to make the tour of the German States; though, perhaps, the length of his stay at Baden may have escaped your recollection. It was in that city that I had resided from my infancy, under the care of a female relation, who was Superior of the Convent of St. Mary, and who often permitted me to leave the Nunnery, under the protection of the wife of her brother, who had an employment at Baden under the Emperor. How Sir Piercy Delville became acquainted with this family I know not; but one day that I was permitted by my relation, the Abbess of St. Mary's, to pay them a visit, I met

him there, and, from his manners, found that he was an intimate, and a frequent gueſt.

" During the whole of that day, Mr. Delville (he was then no more) paid me the moſt particular attention, and, in the evening, inſiſted on accompanying me to the gate of my Convent. Young as I was, for I was only in my ſixteenth year, I ſaw the impropriety of ſuch a meaſure, and deſired only to be attended by a ſervant; but the gentleman at whoſe houſe we were, laughed at my prudery, as he was pleaſed to term it, and encouraged the gallantry of his young friend, who accordingly perſiſted in eſcorting me home.

" But

" But why ſhould I weary your Lordſhip by this prolixity? It is enough for you to be informed that, from that time, ſcarcely a day elapſed that I was not invited to the houſe of my relation, where I conſtantly met Sir Piercy, who left me not long in ignorance of the paſſionate ſentiments of love that he entertained for me—a love that I returned with but too much ardour.

" This attachment, and indeed even our acquaintance, were carefully concealed from the Abbeſs of my Convent; her brother had his own reaſons for it, as I had mine for ſuch ſilence. I felt that I could not mention the name of Delville without an emotion that would diſcover my partiality; and alas! Sir Piercy was a heretic!—I knew that, ſhould my couſin diſcover our love, ſhe would never

again ſuffer me to leave the Convent, till well aſſured that the dangerous Delville had quitted Baden; and I had not ſufficient fortitude to expoſe myſelf to the miſerable certainty of never ſeeing him more.

" One day, about ſix weeks after my firſt meeting with Sir Piercy, the relation at whoſe houſe we met, took an opportunity of drawing me aſide after dinner, and introducing the ſubject of his friend's attachment to me, giving me ſome advice concerning him.

' Mr. Delville, my dear Thereſa,' ſaid he, ' has made me the confidant of his paſſion for you, and of his wiſhes to make you his wife. But you cannot be ignorant that he is the only ſon of a Britiſh Peer; though, perhaps,

perhaps, you may not know that any marriage that he may contract with a Roman Catholic, is liable to be rendered invalid at the pleaſure of his father, who is ſtill likely to live many years. If, however, you are willing to confide in his honour, that he will immediately on the demiſe of Lord Somerſet have your union confirmed, Mr. Delville offers you his hand, and this evening will ſee you his wife!—You muſt conſider your ſituation, my dear Thereſa,' continued my relation; 'you are conſcious that your father, from having ſix ſons, can do very little for you, had not your long eſtrangement from his preſence, and his concluding that my ſiſter will ſettle you in St. Mary's, in all probability determined him to do nothing. You muſt ſee, therefore, that the ſituation of a Nun is the moſt you have

to expect from the kindneſs either of your father or my ſiſter. She, it is true, has the power of procuring your admiſſion into the pale of the Church without a penſion, and to put you on a reſpectable footing in her own Convent; but ſhould ſhe happen to die before you have made your profeſſion, you have no alternative, but muſt become a ſervant in the religious houſe which has ſheltered your infancy.'

" My relation now repreſented to me the contraſt between ſuch a deſtiny, and the one that awaited me in accepting the propoſals of Mr. Delville. It was too much for the reſolution of a girl of ſixteen, and I bluſh when I confeſs to your Lordſhip, that I ſuffered myſelf to be perſuaded to do what I ſecretly deſired; and I was united to your

ſon

ſon by a Prieſt whom my relation engaged to perform the ceremony; he, at the ſame time, giving me a ſolemn promiſe in writing that he would, as ſoon as he became his own maſter, perfect our union by having the ceremony again performed according to the rites of the Proteſtant religion.

" I ſhall not trouble your Lordſhip with the hiſtory of the next three years, at the end of which time I accompanied Sir Piercy to London, where he very ſoon left me, on his ſhip being ordered to the Weſt Indies. From that time, my Lord, I never ſaw him but once or twice, till the laſt autumn, when I was ſo unfortunate as to diſcover the occaſion of his eſtrangement from me, during his viſits to London, in his newly-formed

attachment to the ſiſter of his friend Mr. Hennington.

" On being convinced of his infidelity, I wrote to him, requeſting in the moſt earneſt manner to ſee him, and my deſire was ſoon accompliſhed. He came to my lodgings immediately, and I cannot relate the ſcene that enſued. Perhaps my reproaches might have been too ſevere; but they were ſufficiently ſo as violently to exaſperate Sir Piercy, and his reſentment was ſhewn in a manner fatal to my peace. Several papers were laying on a table beſide me, that I had juſt taken from a little cabinet, and amongſt them was the promiſe given me by Delville when we were married at Baden; he perceived it, and ſnatching it up, flung it into the fire, exclaiming that no bond of union

ever

ever ſhould ſubſiſt between us. Ah my Lord! conceive what muſt have been my feelings when I beheld the important paper in a moment entirely conſumed, and heard the inſulting farewel of Sir Piercy, who bade adieu, with a ſneer, to Miſs Meliphant!

"From that time I have never ſeen him, ſo much has he been occupied by my rival Miſs Hennington, whom I now find he has baſely ſeduced, and who has lately lain in of a ſon."

Lord Somerſet's correſpondent then proceeded to inform him of the place where Miſs Hennington was concealed; and where ſhe ſaid Miſs Delville, at the inſtances of her brother, conſtantly viſited her; and con-

cluded by ſigning herſelf, "the much injured Thereſa Meliphant Delville."

With what ſenſations Miſs Delville peruſed this letter cannot eaſily be deſcribed; though certain that Serena had not been ſeduced by Delville, ſhe found herſelf neceſſitated by her promiſe, ſo ſolemnly exacted by him, to ſuffer his character to bear the obloquy of ſuch an action, in addition to the infamy it merited for his conduct towards Miſs Meliphant, detailed in the letter, to which ſhe gave implicit credit.

She folded up the paper, and trembling with grief and agitation, reſtored it to her father without ſaying a word.

"It is now near ſix weeks," ſaid the good Peer, "ſince I received this letter, to which I gave very little credit: I own I looked upon it as a weak effort at revenge in a jealous woman; who, having fallen a victim to her own credulity and the artifices of her lover, had herſelf become a deſigner, and fabricated this tale to excuſe her own lapſe from virtue, whilſt ſhe reprobated that of her rival. That Miſs Meliphant ſuppoſed Miſs Hennington to be ſuch, I had not a doubt; but I could not conceive that her jealouſy had not carried her much beyond what was really the caſe. At firſt too, the incoherency of the letter gave me an idea of the falſehood of that part of it reſpecting the writer's ſelf; yet, upon reflection, that very incoherency impreſſed me with a notion

of

of its truth; as the woman who had ſufficient art to compoſe ſo many circumſtances, would ſurely have added a few more, to render her tale more perfect, and would have written it with more preciſion."

"What then, Sir," interrogated Philippa, in a faltering voice, "is your opinion of my brother's marriage?"

"That it is a form not good in law, and that, while I live, never ſhall be ſo."

"Ah my Lord!" cried Miſs Delville, "what a ſentence for the unhappy Thereſa!"

"My dear girl," ſaid Lord Somerſet, firmly, "you ſhould not ſuffer your pity for that

that deluded young woman to overcome your ſenſe of what is right. You ſurely would not have the future Lord Somerſet united to a Papiſt?"

"No, my Lord;—yet ſtill—her fame—her peace—her honour——"

"Ah Philippa," interrupted his Lordſhip, "Miſs Meliphant ſets little ſtore by any of theſe, or ſhe never would have done what ſhe has.—Truſt me, that woman can have very little regard either for fame or virtue, who throws herſelf into the arms of a young man who ſhe knows cannot marry her."

"But this young lady, Sir," returned Miſs Delville, "was married according to

the rites of her own Church, and conſiders herſelf as my brother's wife."

"That ſhe might do, had ſhe only made a private vow to be faithful to him.—Think you, my child," continued Lord Somerſet, "that an oath is more ſolemn or binding for being made in the preſence of any particular perſon?"

Miſs Delville did not reply; ſhe was aſtoniſhed, ſhe felt ſtaggered. Like the generality of young women, ſhe had been brought up in a ſtrict obſervance of all the forms of religion, but ſhe had never conſidered their ſpirit: ſhe would not ſing a ſong, or play upon the harp on a Sunday, becauſe ſhe had been told at ſchool, by her Governeſs, that it was a heatheniſh practice; but though to hear

hear another do ſo, ſhocked her, ſhe could never give a reaſon why it did.

Lord Somerſet, on the contrary, had reflected ſeriouſly upon the ſubject; and his religion was that of nature and ſenſibility, accompanied by the ſtricteſt morality. To religious ceremonies he attended but little, but his heart was always filled with a lively gratitude for the providing care of the Almighty, and an unſhaken truſt in his goodneſs. He was not a frequenter of the Church, but he was of the abodes of wretchedneſs, and they never long remained ſuch. He did not often pray; but he was unwearied in his efforts to bring the ſinner back to virtue, to promote induſtry and happineſs amongſt all around him, and to feed and cheriſh the orphan and the widow.

Though

Though confident in being right himſelf, Lord Somerſet never wiſhed to bring over others to his opinions, and particularly women, in the article of religion. Perhaps, in regard to them, his Lordſhip entertained ſome notions not perfectly liberal, but certainly very common: he thought their proper ſtate was one of ſubjection, and he was no friend to a ſyſtem of very highly improving their underſtandings, leſt, in becoming rational beings, they ſhould be leſs docile and agreeable as women. His Lordſhip was therefore diſpleaſed with himſelf for letting the converſation take the turn it had inſenſibly done, and changed it immediately; he ſaid, however, very little till they were joined by the Chevalier Bayar and the Count, who had, the night before, been prevailed on to take a bed at the caſtle.

From

From the time that her father had diſappointed her in her project of viſiting Serena that morning, Miſs Delville had reſolved to requeſt the Count to go in her place, to enquire after the fair ſecluded invalid; and ſhe was therefore ſomewhat diſconcerted at meeting him ſo accompanied, as it was impoſſible for her then to give him the commiſſion ſhe deſigned. Not, however, of a diſpoſition eaſily to relinquiſh a benevolent intention, ſhe was for the firſt part of their walk aſſiduous in ſeeking an opportunity of ſpeaking to the Count, in which ſhe was conſtantly baffled; and at length Lord Somerſet, taking the arm of De Melanville, drew him a little into the rear of the party.

It was impoſſible to miſtake ſo palpable an intimation of the wiſhes of her father, and

Philippa accordingly joined the Chevalier, with whom ſhe attempted to enter into converſation; but, without appearing to notice it, her ſolicitude to ſpeak to the Count had been obſerved by the Chevalier, and as he imagined its motive beyond a doubt, he felt not much inclination to talk: he was, notwithſtanding, too polite to remain ſilent, or anſwer her queſtions either with abruptneſs or indifference.

Miſs Delville enquired if it was his intention to remain long in England.

"I believe but a very ſhort time," he anſwered; "it was, on my coming over, my deſign to apply for employment to the Lords of the Admiralty, and to ſpend the intermediate time from my application being given

given in, and my receiving an anſwer, as Lord Somerſet was ſo good as to deſire it, in Yorkſhire."

"It ſhould ſeem," ſaid Miſs Delville, "that you have relinquiſhed that intention; and your reaſons for it are doubtleſs ſtrong ones."

There was ſomething of pique in the manner in which Miſs Delville ſaid this, which though ſhe felt, ſhe was far from wiſhing to have appear; and it did not eſcape the Chevalier.

"They are indeed ſtrong ones," returned he; "but ſuch as muſt be entirely unintereſting to you."

"Why

"Why ſhould you imagine ſo, Chevalier? Have you any reaſon to ſuppoſe me indifferent to the concerns of my friends?"

"Reaſon and I, Madam, are, I fear, much at variance;—but my memory is too faithful for my repoſe, at the ſame time that it is in ſome meaſure its ſafeguard."

"Your words are enigmatical to me," ſaid Miſs Delville, looking anxiouſly in his face.

Bayar ſmiled.

"It is but my imperfect knowledge of the Engliſh language," returned he.

"If

"If you underſtood it as ill as you do the inhabitants of the country," cried Philippa, with ſome warmth, "you would have little buſineſs to engage in our fleet."

"I hope I ſhall ever underſtand, and be mindful of the reſpect due to the daughter of Lord Somerſet;" was the anſwer of the Chevalier, accompanied by a bow, in which there was ſome reſentment, but much more dejection.

Miſs Delville was too much hurt to attempt to renew the converſation the ſpeech of her companion had broken off, and they proceeded on their walk in ſilence. Philippa imagined the words of the Chevalier, in ſpeaking of the tenacity of his memory, to allude to a former converſation between them;

them; and thought he meant to insinuate to her, that though, in despite of his reason, he continued far from indifferent to her, he was too proud to hazard a repetition of the cool rejection she had in a former time given to his love.

"Oh that he knew my heart," said she to herself, "or would give me an opportunity of unfolding it to him! But he has already ceased to esteem me, and will very soon learn to despise me!"

They had by this time reached the house; and though Lord Somerset and the Count continued their walk, by turning into a path leading round to the back of it, neither Miss Delville nor the Chevalier were in a humour

humour to prolong their's, and whilſt the latter went to the breakfaſt-room, the former retired to her own apartment.

CHAP. V.

MISS DELVILLE had now leiſure to feel anxiety concerning Serena, of her cuſtomary viſit to whom ſhe had been diſappointed, and whom ſhe determined to ſee immediately after breakfaſt; but in forming this reſolution Philippa, for the firſt time in her life, felt a deſire to conceal an action of her's from her father; but ſuch was the

cruel ſituation in which ſhe was placed by her promiſe to Sir Piercy, that ſhe could not obviate the objections ſhe knew his Lordſhip would make to her viſiting a young perſon, ſituated as he ſuppoſed Serena to be; at the ſame time ſhe could not endure the idea of abandoning her in moments of mental and bodily ſufferings ſo ſevere.

As ſoon, therefore, as breakfaſt was over, ſhe retired to her own room, declining the invitation of Mrs. Powis and the Chevalier Bayar to accompany them in a walk, that the former overcame her indolence to undertake in compliment to the latter. Miſs Delville was pleaſed with this arrangement, as it ſecured her from their obſervation, as ſhe alſo was to obſerve that the Count and her father had got very deep into a diſſertation

on

on the merits of Camoens, who was a favourite author with both.

Philippa waited in her own chamber only till ſhe had ſeen the walking party take a path directly in a contrary direction to the one ſhe meant to purſue; and then, having wrapped a ſhawl round her, haſtened down ſtairs. In the hall ſhe unexpectedly met Lord Somerſet, who aſked her if ſhe had changed her mind, and meant to join her couſin?

His Lordſhip made this enquiry in a manner that Philippa underſtood, as if he had ſaid—"I know you do not intend to have any companion in your walk;" and, conſcious of the rooted averſion that he entertained for any ſpecies of duplicity, ſhe dared

not deceive him, and therefore anſwered in the negative.

"You are then going to ſee Miſs Hennington?" ſaid his Lordſhip.

"I am, my Lord," anſwered Miſs Delville, timidly, and dreading a prohibition to do ſo.

Lord Somerſet was ſilent for a few moments, and then ſaid—

"Well, my dear girl, though in her preſent circumſtances I do not quite approve your ſeeing her, yet as I hope that Delville will have honour enough to ſecure her reputation by marriage, I will not command you to

to give up your intention, but will go with you myſelf."

The conſiderate kindneſs of this ſpeech, which Miſs Delville little expected, had almoſt induced her to forego a plan which his Lordſhip did not entirely approve; but ſhe languiſhed to ſee her friend and the little Piercy, whom ſhe doted on; and taking her father's arm, they proceeded together and in ſilence till they reached the cottage. Several times during their walk Miſs Delville was going to aſk Lord Somerſet whether he had really been to the cottage in the morning, and if he had ſeen Serena; but ſhe could not ſummon courage to interrupt the reverie in which he was evidently abſorbed, and her deſire of knowing was confined to her own breaſt.

Miſs Delville, after having enquired for Mrs. Barton, and heard that ſhe was above ſtairs, aſcended alone to the apartment of her friend, which was inſide the ſmall one now occupied by the infant and its nurſe. In paſſing through this room ſhe enquired how the child was; and finding that the ſymptoms ſtill continued favourable, paſſed on to the chamber of the unfortunate Serena, which Mrs. Barton, who had been ſitting with her, left as ſhe entered.

Philippa approached the bed, and ſoftly drawing aſide the curtain, beheld Miſs Hennington ſitting almoſt erect, being ſupported by pillows, but from her ſtillneſs, and her eyes being cloſed, ſhe imagined her to be aſleep. This ſhe was not ſorry to obſerve, as from thence ſhe had hopes that the delirium,

which

which had ſo much alarmed her the day before, was ſubſiding, and ſhe ſat down on the bed to contemplate, for a few moments, the lovely countenance of the hapleſs Serena. It was faintly tinged with the hectic fluſh of fever, and all expreſſion ſeemed to have forſaken it, except that which the formation of her features gave; her lips were white and often agitated with a tremulous motion, when her breathing, ſhort and heavy, appeared particularly difficult, or when ſhe attempted to ſpeak in her ſleep.

Extremely affected at the ſtate in which ſhe beheld this fair and ill-fated victim of duplicity, Miſs Delville aroſe to leave the room; but as ſhe drew the curtains together, could not refrain from giving one more look at the object of her ſolicitude. At this

moment Serena pronounced the firſt articulate ſounds ſhe had done ſince her entrance; they were thoſe of complaint, but they partook of the ſoftneſs of her nature, and ſhe was again for ſome moments ſilent, before ſhe ſaid, in an energetic tone, though the languor of illneſs made it a very low one—

"Ceaſe, Delville, I entreat you, thoſe arguments to which I never muſt yield.—Leave me to the miſery in which I am hopeleſſly involved by the ſacrifice I have made!—Leave me to lament my fatal error, and weep over the victim of my fault!"

A long pauſe of ſilence followed theſe touching expreſſions, and ſhe then, in the ſame plaintive accents, reproached the perſon to whom ſhe in fancy addreſſed herſelf, for

for the cruel deceit he had practiſed on her when conſcious he was the huſband of another woman!

From this Miſs Delville underſtood that ſhe fancied Mr. Delamain was within hearing; and in the next moment the invalid evidently imagined ſhe ſpoke to the lady whom that gentleman had lately divorced, and conjured her to pardon the involuntary wrong ſhe had done her when unconſcious even of her exiſtence.

During another pauſe that now enſued in the ravings of the invalid, Miſs Delville was ſtartled by a ſigh, or rather a groan, within the chamber; and looking towards the foot of the bed, beheld Lord Somerſet holding open the curtains, and gazing, with a coun-

tenance on which the deepeſt anguiſh was impreſſed, on the faded form of the once beautiful Serena.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, in a tone of indignant ſorrow, "that I ſhould live to ſee the ruin of ſo fair, ſo pure a being—the diſorder of ſuch a mind—and to know that it was the work of my darling ſon!—Oh Piercy! Piercy! how early art thou loſt to pity and to ſhame!"

Lord Somerſet might, and probably would, much longer have continued his exclamations, had not Serena again ſpoke; and though every word ſhe uttered was like a dagger to his heart, he could not reſiſt the faſcination that impelled him to liſten, and he anxiouſly attended whilſt, with all the

incoherency of delirium, ſhe addreſſed herſelf alternately to Delville, Delamain, and Honora, in a manner the moſt afflicting to the venerable Peer, who mourned at once for the ſorrows of one whom he loved as a daughter, and for the depravity of a ſon he had hitherto idolized; whilſt Philippa, who was acquainted with her ſtory, clearly underſtood that her reproaches were directed to Delamain—her touching complaints, her tender ſoothings addreſſed to Delville alone.

Miſs Delville, who ſaw how deeply her father was affected by thoſe mournful incoherencies, now went round to the foot of the bed, and taking his hand, attempted to draw him away; but diſengaging himſelf from her, he claſped both hands together, exclaiming—

"Oh Delville!—but that I feel myſelf a father!—Accurſed—for ever accurſed——"

In violent agitation Philippa interrupted him.

"My father," ſhe cried, "my Lord, think on what you ſay——"

She was unable to go on, and Lord Somerſet, with a melancholy ſmile, ſaid to her—

"Fear not, my child; I can execrate the guilt and inhumanity of your brother, but I have no right to curſe him!—Yet—he is no longer my ſon—he is—he ſhall be——"

"More

"More dear to you than ever!" again interrupted Miſs Delville. "My Lord," ſhe continued with increaſing earneſtneſs, from perceiving that her father ſeemed to liſten with the anxiety of rekindling hope, "you are cruelly miſtaken!—Believe me Delville, inſtead of meriting your diſpleaſure, will in time prove himſelf worthy of your fondeſt approbation. You now attach to him the guilt that belongs to another."

Miſs Delville ſuddenly recollected herſelf, and feared ſhe had ſaid more than her promiſe to Sir Piercy authorized; the thought cauſed a bluſh to paſs acroſs her cheek, which being perceived by Lord Somerſet, he ſaid—

"My

"My child, I approve the affection which leads you to juſtify (were his juſtification poſſible) your brother; but I muſt lament that your zeal ſhould, on this ſubject, lead you beyond propriety."

If it was his Lordſhip's intention to ſay more, he was prevented by Serena ſhrieking violently ſeveral times, which made him haſten from the room, at the ſame time that Miſs Delville ran round to the pillow of her friend, whom ſhe found ſome imaginary terror had overcome, for ſhe had fainted.

It was ſome time before Miſs Delville, though aided by Mrs. Barton and the child's nurſe in her efforts to recover the invalid, had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing animation return to the features of the unhappy Serena; and

and then recollecting her father, whilſt the nurſe and Mrs. Barton ſtill hung over the ſcarcely revived invalid, ſhe went into the adjoining chamber to look for him.

At the moment when Miſs Hennington had been ſeized with the fit, Lord Somerſet ran into the room where he had ſeen the two women; and ſnatching the infant from the arms of its nurſe, deſired both her and Mrs. Barton to haſten to the aſſiſtance of Miſs Delville.

When that young lady now entered the room, ſhe found him ſtill holding the child in his arms; perhaps it was the firſt time in his life that his Lordſhip had ever found himſelf ſo ſituated, and the novelty of the circumſtance conſpired with various emo-

tions

tions to render the preſent moment highly intereſting. He fancied he beheld the offſpring of a beloved ſon, feeble, helpleſs!—its innocent eyes entirely cloſed by the cruel diſtemper which ſwelled and disfigured every other feature.—Had Lord Somerſet not been ſo deeply affected by the incoherent ravings of the mother, and conſidered the child in a manner as his own, it is poſſible that he might rather have felt diſguſted than intereſted by the little object before him; but now, as he delivered it to Miſs Delville, he threw himſelf into a chair, and covered his face with both hands. But the ſtruggle was ſoon terminated, and reſuming his uſual ſteady dignity, he told his daughter that he ſhould return home; and, without aſking her to accompany him, departed.

Thus

Thus tacitly permitted to remain where ſhe was, Miſs Delville thought not of returning till near the cuſtomary hour of dinner at the caſtle, and then, juſt as ſhe was leaving the cottage, ſhe met De Melanville coming to enquire for Serena.

Philippa informed him that ſhe was now much more quiet than ſhe had been ſince the fever had ſeized her, which was as much as could be expected; and together they took the way to the caſtle, which was at preſent the home of the Count.

Miſs Delville, who, ever ſince the morning when Mrs. Powis had ſo generouſly pleaded the cauſe of the Count to her, had wiſhed for an opportunity of ſpeaking to him alone, was not ſorry that this occurred during

during their walk, though it appeared as if he would rather they had had a companion. With ſome difficulty, and with much addreſs, Miſs Delville contrived to lead the converſation, of which the Count was very ſparing, to a point that ſeemed ſo favourable to a declaration of his attachment to her, that De Melanville, in deſpite of his diffidence and his reſolutions, could not refrain from giving her a hint of his paſſion. This was enough for Miſs Delville: ſhe thanked him for the kindneſs of the ſentiments he entertained for her, which ſhe did not pretend to deny ſhe had long been acquainted with; but, explicitly giving him to underſtand that he never muſt hope for her hand, ſince ſhe found her affections never could be his, ſhe added—

"Though

" Though I muſt hope, Count, that your happineſs has not, or will not be very materially injured by your ill-placed attachment to a woman ſo inſenſible as myſelf, believe me, I ſhall never ceaſe to regret the impoſſibility of my feeling for you the ſentiments that you wiſh, till I ſee your regards transferred to ſome other perſon.—I will not offer you my friendſhip, as I believe you have long ſince known that you poſſeſſed it with the warmeſt ſincerity; but I will tell you that if you mean to prove yourſelf really anxious for my ſatisfaction, as I think you are, you will never again beſtow a ſingle thought of love on me.—I have heard that the ſureſt way of diſplacing one object from the heart, is to encourage a preference for another: look round you then, my amiable friend, on the women with whom you are

moſt

moſt intimate, and you will doubtleſs find one whoſe eſtimable qualities will enſure your eſteem—whoſe perſonal merits may animate you to admire her—in whoſe affection for you, you may find happineſs, and in her fortune the means of comfort and benevolence."

"Ah Miſs Delville!" returned the Count, ſighing, "what a flattering picture have you drawn of the deſtiny that you fancy may await me!—I too have ſometimes indulged in romantic viſions of a lot like this; but you have only this moment convinced me of their futility, and that I muſt not hope ever to ſee them realized."

"Pardon me, Count," ſaid Miſs Delville, "I have only endeavoured to convince you,

you, that you have in your viſions miſtaken the perſon who is to confer your felicity; and ſhare it; not to ſhew you (what I do not myſelf believe) that you are not deſtined to enjoy happineſs in its fulleſt extent. The Fates, my good friend," ſhe added, ſmiling, "are very often moſt wrongfully accuſed, when we ſet them down as the cauſes of our loſs of repoſe; for, truſt me, nothing is more true than that "people reaſon and refine themſelves into a thouſand miſeries, by chuſing to ſettle that they can only be contented in *one* way, whereas they might be equally happy in others *."

Miſs Delville's quotation proved the truth of a remark, which having been ſtigmatized

* Madame D'Arblay.

as

as common-place, its juſtice is not ſo univerſally allowed as it ſhould be, namely, "that it is much eaſier to give good counſel than to practiſe it oneſelf." But Miſs Delville endeavoured to perſuade herſelf that her rejection of the Count aroſe ſimply from the certainty that her accepting him would make her couſin unhappy; and not by any means becauſe ſhe had choſen to ſettle that ſhe could only be contented in an union with the Chevalier Bayar.

What ſhe had ſaid, appeared to make a deep impreſſion on the mind of the Count; but as he continued ſilent, Miſs Delville could not diſcover whether ſhe had led him to reflect on the conduct of Mrs. Powis, and the ſentiments that inſpired it, which ſhe was

was aſtoniſhed he had not before comprehended.

When they arrived at what was called the little park-gate, and which was at no great diſtance from the houſe, the Count ſuddenly ſtopped, ſaying to his fair companion—

" You muſt excuſe my having the honour of attending you farther.—I find ſolitude and thought to be, at preſent, what beſt ſuit me. I hope I am not preſuming; but you have given riſe to ideas of ſuch a nature, as I cannot at once give way to—they are too flattering."

The Count ſuddenly broke off, and bowing, turned from the gate, which Miſs Delville

Delville opened, and entered. Within it, the firſt object ſhe beheld was the Chevalier Bayar, who had been gathering a lily of the valley on a long bank, where it bloomed in great profuſion, beneath the ſhade of the park wall.

It was for Miſs Delville that he had been buſied, as he remembered how fond ſhe was of this fragrant plant; but the words of the Count, which he had plainly heard, and, as he fancied, as plainly underſtood, took from him all pleaſure in the idea of preſenting her with a bouquet; and he ſuffered the ſtalks he had collected to drop from his hand on the ground, as abandoning his employment, he returned to the path.

Miſs

Miſs Delville ſtooped, and picking up ſome of the flowers he had ſcattered, ſaid, with a ſmile—

"You certainly muſt have had ſome very particular inducement to collect with ſuch care, what you now fling away with indifference."

Had Miſs Delville ſtudied to find an expreſſion particularly ill-ſuited both to the manner of the Chevalier, and to her own ideas of it, ſhe could not have made uſe of one more perfectly improper than the word indifference; for not a ſingle trait of ſuch a nature was obſervable either in that, or in his countenance: in both, it was a compoſition of pique, dejection, and concern, which did not vaniſh as he replied—

"Miſs Delville is, as uſual, right.—Hope was my inducement for the firſt, and its extinction for the laſt."

"Again, Chevalier, I muſt tell you, you are unintelligible."

"I fear I muſt always be ſo," returned the Chevalier, with as cold an air as was in his nature to aſſume towards a lovely and intereſting young woman.

It was now Miſs Delville's turn to feel piqued, and to bluſh for her partiality to a man, who, ſhe thought, evidently meant to ſhew her that her former power over his heart no longer exiſted, by wilfully miſunderſtanding every thing ſhe could ſay or do. Determined, however, whatever it might coſt

coſt her feelings, to aſſume towards him the ſame cold indifference that ſeemed to mark his conduct towards her, ſhe reſolved to ſhun his converſation as much as was conſiſtent with politeneſs. But in the event it proved that Miſs Delville, like moſt young perſons of ſtrong ſenſibility, overacted the part ſhe meant to perform, and inſtead of being coolly civil, became frigidly reſerved towards the Chevalier.

As if it had been deſtined that every occurrence of this memorable day ſhould be peculiarly diſtreſſing to Miſs Delville, Mrs. Powis took it into her head to renew the obſervations ſhe had ſo often made before, on Miſs Hennington's long ſtay in Norfolk; and a gentleman, who poſſeſſed an eſtate in that county, happening to dine at the

caſtle, ſhe was extremely inquiſitive concerning the ſuppoſed aunt of Serena. The gentleman in vain tried to recollect ſuch a perſon, and at length aſſured Mrs. Powis that Hennington was a name he had never heard before; nor did he believe, he ſaid, that any perſons of conſideration in the county of Norfolk bore it.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

WHEN Miſs Delville, on the following day, renewed her viſit to the two invalids at the cottage, ſhe was not a little ſurpriſed to find a lady ſitting in the outer room, holding the little Piercy, on whom her eyes were fixed with an expreſſion of the tendereſt compaſſion, on her knees, and endeavouring to huſh him to ſleep. Philippa ſtarted on beholding a ſtranger, and her firſt impulſe was to retreat to the parlour, and call Mrs. Barton to her, to give an explanation of

who this viſiter might be: but before ſhe had time to retire, the lady perceived her, and roſe from her ſeat; but inſtead of ſpeaking, curtſied, and walked to the window with the infant ſtill in her arms.

Miſs Delville followed, ſaying in a low voice to the ſtranger—

"From meeting you in this place, Madam, I can have little doubt that you are by ſome means connected with, or at leaſt known to Madame D'Albain?"

Miſs Delville heſitated, and the ſtranger inſtantly replied—

"Excuſe me, Miſs Delville, I have neither of thoſe claims to hope my good offices

offices may be acceptable; but I feel that I have others, which I am ſorry to find I muſt forego."

Whilſt the ſtranger was ſpeaking, and during the pauſe that enſued when ſhe had concluded, Philippa had been attentively examining her features, which ſhe had a faint recollection of having ſeen before, though ſhe could not form even a conjecture who ſhe was:—her form and face, though totally different from her's, could only be equalled in beauty by Serena's: her figure was rather low, and extremely delicate; and her countenance marked with the lines of ſtrong ſenſe and penetration, which did not take from its ſweetneſs of expreſſion; her air was dignified, and there was a ſpirit in her dark grey eyes, large, clear, and ſparkling,

that, but for the ſoftneſs of her ſmile, would have given the beholder an idea that ſhe poſſeſſed more *hauteur* than is amiable in the female character.

For ſeveral minutes the ſilence of both ladies had been uninterrupted, though both felt an earneſt deſire to ſpeak; but the ſtranger was at length the firſt to begin.

"I ſee your aſtoniſhment, Miſs Delville, both at my appearance in a place, which you imagined ſecure from all viſits but your own benevolent ones, and at the little I have ſaid. But to own the truth, nothing could be farther from my intention or wiſhes than that you ſhould find me here. I fancied that the return of Lord Somerſet to the caſtle, and the company he has brought with

with him, would have effectually prevented your excurſions to this place, or I ſhould not have come near it."

Miſs Delville expreſſed her concern that the fair ſtranger ſhould have felt herſelf reſtrained from her viſits to Madame D'Albain (as ſhe ſtill called Serena, though almoſt certain the lady was acquainted with her real name and ſtory), by imagining ſhe would be there; ſaying politely, that ſhe ſhould have felt her pleaſure in the attentions ſhe had ſhewn Madame, infinitely leſſened, had ſhe conceived that ſhe had deprived her of a more agreeable viſiter.

"Miſs Delville," returned the ſtranger, "I will own to you that I cannot help feeling flattered by your politeneſs, and it is moſt true

that I cannot infinitely regret our meeting, ſince I have the ſatisfaction of knowing it to be unpremeditated. I have very long deſired to ſee you; but, conſcious of the predicament in which I ſtand, I ſhould have thought myſelf unpardonable in intruding myſelf on your notice."

"I am utterly ignorant of your meaning, Madam," ſaid Philippa; "but I am certain I ſhall never regret the chance that has introduced us to each other. But I err—I have not yet had the honour of hearing your name."

"The only name I can now, with propriety, claim, is Honora!" ſaid the ſtranger, whilſt a bluſh ſtole to her cheek, and her eyes

eyes ſeemed to fear encountering the mild ones of Miſs Delville, who exclaimed—

"Gracious Heaven, Mrs. Delamain!"

"No, Miſs Delville," returned Honora, now again ſelf-collected, "of that title the laws have deprived me. Happy, moſt happy had it been for me if I had never borne it."

Honora ſeemed to expect that her companion would ſpeak; but what ſhe could poſſibly ſay, was more than Miſs Delville was able to diſcover, and ſtill preſerved ſilence till Honora reſumed.

"As I feel, Madam, that this meeting never ſhould have taken place, and alſo that,

no other muſt ever happen, I naturally feel a wiſh to ſhare at leaſt a ſmall portion of your eſteem, by endeavouring to convince you that I do not merit all the obloquy with which my name is loaded; but to enter on any defence of myſelf, or even to attempt to palliate matters, ſhall only be done by me, by way of being uſeful to others.—You, Miſs Delville, I am happy to ſee (for I know and revere your virtues) are not likely to be in any ſituation in which a knowledge of that which has undone me could be ſerviceable; you poſſeſs fortune adequate to your rank, and have already paſſed the age of childhood, (when the mind is too weak to form a judgment for the future), at which the poverty and ambition of my parents obliged me to take upon myſelf the duties of a wife, without inſtructing me in what they conſiſted,

and when I knew not their extent or ſacredneſs."

There was a ſomething in the manner of the unfortunate Honora, as ſhe pronounced theſe words, that could not fail to intereſt ſuch a heart as Miſs Delville's: it expreſſed a deep and afflicting ſenſe of her own errors, and a generous ſcorn to take advantage of thoſe circumſtances which ſhe might have adduced to leſſen her criminality; and though, at the moment, there was nothing which ſhe would not have forfeited as the price of enjoying the tender pity of Miſs Delville, ſhe diſdained to plead thoſe circumſtances that would infallibly have made that young lady, ſevere as were her prejudices, compaſſionate, rather than condemn her.

After

After a ſilence of ſome minutes, Honora thus reſumed, with a calm firmneſs in her voice that almoſt contradicted the melting ſenſibility that beamed in her eyes.

" I have now, Madam, only to mention the motives of my intruſion on the ſcene of your benevolence, for which I hope you may excuſe me.—Some time ſince it was my fortune to give an intimation to Miſs Hennington, which would have ſaved her from much ſubſequent ſuffering, had not her artleſs affections been devoted to a man of the moſt conſummate diſſembling powers, and whoſe heart was as cold as his paſſions were warm and irritable. Conſcious that I had wronged Mr. Delamain, I ſhould then have conſented to the divorce he meditated, had I not had a daughter, againſt whoſe deareſt

intereſts

intereſts I conceived ſuch a plan to militate; but, determined as I was reſolutely to oppoſe this meaſure, I thought myſelf called upon to open the eyes of Miſs Hennington to her ſituation. In the firſt inſtance I failed, but in the ſecond I was ſucceſsful; though, to ſucceed, I was obliged to agonize a heart that paſſionately loved me, and which my former conduct had contributed to break. Mr. Hennington knew that I had forfeited my honour; but he thought my principles ſtill might in ſome reſpects be depended on, and at his deſire I promiſed not to loſe ſight of his lovely ſiſter, though, as he took the greateſt pains to prevent our meeting, I eaſily diſcerned that he thought me a properer friend than acquaintance.—Some months ſince my daughter was taken from this world by a fever, and I immediately

diately wrote to Mr. Delamain, then in France, to tell him I ſhould no longer oppoſe the divorce, which he has ſince procured. I was not, in the meantime, unmindful of my promiſe to watch over Miſs Hennington; and that taſk brought me to this country, which was, ſome time ſince, well known to me. Over Mr. Delamain's motions I have kept a ſtrict eye, and two days ſince diſcovered that he was wounded in a duel, in which his own baſeneſs had engaged him with a friend of the deceaſed Mr. Hennington. Certain that Serena could not hear of ſuch a circumſtance unmoved, I came to this cottage very early yeſterday morning, deſigning gently to break the intelligence to her: but the ſtate in which I found her precluded that; and as my meeting with Lord Somerſet here,

informed

informed me of his being returned to the country, I made no ſcruple of coming hither at ſo late an hour to-day, confident I ran no riſk of meeting you; and unable to bear the thought, that a being ſo dear to the much-injured and moſt amiable George Hennington, ſhould be ſick, without a ſingle friend to watch by her pillow. Now, Miſs Delville," continued this extraordinary young woman, "I have informed you of the motives of my viſits, which, I aſſure you, ſhall not be repeated, ſince I find you ſtill frequent this place. The guilty and unfortunate Honora cannot, with all her ſelf-love, conceive herſelf deſerving of being known to you. Forget then, Madam, that you have ever ſeen me; though, if an idea of me obtrudes itſelf, let it be one of pity rather than abhorrence!"

As

As ſhe ſaid this, Honora laid the infant on the bed, after having tenderly kiſſed it, and haſtened from the room, before Miſs Delville had recovered the power of ſpeech, of which this extraordinary ſcene had deprived her.

As ſoon as ſhe could ſufficiently recollect herſelf, which was not for ſeveral minutes, Philippa ſought Mrs. Barton, who was in the chamber of Serena; and from her learned, that the phyſician who had before attended Madame D'Albain, had been there that morning, and had pronounced the patient to be in no immediate danger; that he had ordered her to be kept quiet, and promiſed to call on the following day.

Miſs

Miſs Delville had no doubt that the viſit of the phyſician had been cauſed by the attention of Honora; but how that lady had diſcovered who was the particular perſon to ſend for, ſhe could not conceive.

But ſo ſcrupulouſly had Honora kept the promiſe made to Lieutenant Hennington, that ſhe had been perfectly acquainted even with the moſt ſecret manœuvres of Sir Piercy and De Melanville, concerning the retirement of Serena; and ſhe in fact it was that had cauſed the worthy Mrs. Barton to be recommended to the former: by which means ſhe eſſentially ſerved the combined powers, and ſecured herſelf an agent and informer near Miſs Hennington, for whom ſhe was moſt tenderly intereſted on many accounts.

Though

Though Honora had never herſelf loved Mr. Delamain, and his conduct, together with her unfortunate entanglement with Mr. Oſborne, led her, in a ſhort time after their union, to deteſt him, ſhe was perfectly aware how very fondly he might be beloved by an object, towards whom he thought it worth his while to practiſe the inſinuating arts he ſo well underſtood; and thence her pity for Miſs Hennington was unbounded. She too had experienced all the bitterneſs of finding the man ſhe adored, ſelfiſh and unworthy; and though her connection with him was of a nature very different from the imaginary connubial rights of Serena, ſhe could, from her own feelings, form a tolerable idea of thoſe that muſt diſtract the boſom of that ill-fated girl, on diſcovering the ruin into which ſhe had been plunged by her artful

artful betrayer. The remembrance of the noble George Hennington alſo pleaded powerfully in the favour of his ſiſter with this extraordinary woman, who had always cheriſhed the ſincereſt friendſhip for him—even at the very time that ſhe deſtroyed all his proſpects of happineſs by giving her hand to Mr. Delamain, thereby violating a private engagement to him, entered into without the knowledge of her parents, and becauſe, at the early age of ſixteen, ſhe fancied herſelf in love with him, though in fact he had only excited her vanity, inſtead of touching her heart.

At the time of Honora's marriage, nothing could have been more eaſy than for Mr. Delamain to have acquired her trueſt affections; but he was not at that time ſo

ſyſtematic

ſyſtematic a deceiver as he afterwards proved himſelf, and he would not then affect humility he did not feel, to obtain an end he looked upon as not worthy of his ſolicitude. He thought Honora Seward, without ſixpence for her fortune, highly honoured by his addreſſes, and he took no pains whatever to conceal his ſentiments. He ſaw that her parents were ready to force her into his arms, and his conduct was ſuch as gave every perſon but the infatuated Mr. and Mrs. Seward, plainly to underſtand he accepted, not ſought their daughter.

On Miſs Delville's return home, as ſhe was aſcending the ſtairs to go to her own room, ſhe was unexpectedly overtaken by Lord Somerſet, who aſked her if ſhe had not been to viſit Serena, and how that young lady

lady was. When ſhe had anſwered thoſe enquiries, he ſaid mildly—

"My dear Philippa, I muſt now deſire that you do not again repeat your calls on Miſs Hennington.—Were ſhe alone at the cottage, I believe I ſhould not forbid you to go thither; but I yeſterday morning encountered there a lady, whom I do not think it proper you ſhould have the ſlighteſt communication with; and it is to me the moſt wounding part of the conduct of Delville, that he ſhould have the baſeneſs to preſent to the poor deluded Serena, the abandoned and divorced wife of Mr. Delamain."

"Aſſure yourſelf, my dear Sir," cried Miſs Delville, happy in being able, in ſome meaſure,

meaſure, to lighten the cruel charge brought againſt her brother, "that Piercy is in no way acceſſary to the charitable viſits Mrs. Delamain has paid her."

"How know you this, Philippa?" demanded his Lordſhip.

Miſs Delville then entreating her father to enter her dreſſing-room, that he might more conveniently hear what ſhe had to ſay, candidly related all the occurrences of the morning; dwelling particularly on the generous forbearance of Honora, in promiſing no more to viſit the cottage, ſince *ſhe* ſtill continued to pay her cuſtomary attentions to its fair unhappy inmate.

Lord

Lord Somerſet thanked his daughter for her recital; ſaid Honora Seward was a ſtrange, and in many reſpects a moſt eſtimable character, adding with a ſmile, which Miſs Delville fancied expreſſed hope—

"Would to God you could as fully exculpate Delville from other faults, as you have done from this! Perhaps he may plead ſomething in his own juſtification, provided the letter I ſent him laſt night, reaches him before an opportunity offers of his ſetting ſail for Carlſcrona, which Xavier informs me he meant to loſe no time in doing.—I have," continued the good Peer, "been making many enquiries of that worthy young man concerning this unfortunate affair, with which I muſt believe him perfectly acquainted; and he has owned to me that there

are circumſtances that he has ſolemnly promiſed not to reveal, without the previous conſent of Delville or Serena. He aſſures me that a ſhort time will elucidate every myſtery, and not only exonerate Piercy, but raiſe his character moſt highly in my eſteem. The word of Xavier I cannot doubt; and now that you have cleared up the only circumſtance that ſeemed to ſtagger the confidence in your brother's worth that he entertains, I think I ſhall make myſelf tolerably eaſy."

Miſs Delville was delighted to ſee the cheerfulneſs of her beloved father in ſome meaſure reſtored; but ſhe could not in her own mind account for the ſtrange indifference he ſeemed to feel concerning the affair of Miſs Meliphant. She did not, however,

ever, wiſh to remind him of it juſt then, and after a very little more converſation, they parted.

CHAP. VII.

AT dinner that day, the whole party ſeemed much more ſatisfied with themſelves, and with each other, than they had been for the two preceding days; and the converſation took the ſame lively and inſtructive turn that it generally did when Lord Somerſet was a party in it.

He now, for the firſt time ſince his return home, enquired how his family had employed themſelves during his abſence; a little mark of kind attention he had never before omitted for ſo long a time.

Mrs. Powis replied, with her cuſtomary vivacity, that, as far as ſhe could diſcover, her couſin Philly had been nurſing the ſick and the ſorrowful, in the perſons of Miſs Hennington and that eternal mope, Sir Piercy; and that ſhe had been equally charitably employed in preſerving her friend, the Count, from catching the infection of ſadneſs, by reading, laughing, chatting, and ſinging with him.

Lord Somerſet could not help ſmiling at the laſt mentioned mode of amuſing ſo elegant

elegant a muſician as the Count, as Mrs. Powis's qualifications in that line, were at leaſt equal to, and ſtrongly reſembling thoſe of a pea-hen. He, however, took the opportunity of enquiring if his daughter or niece had read any of the books he had brought them from London.

The latter replied that ſhe had already finiſhed one of them, which had afforded her infinite entertainment, by the delightful deſcription it contained of the land of potatoes.

"I believe I know the book you mean, Emily," ſaid Lord Somerſet; "as, though you know I am not particularly partial to Novels, that one happening to be thrown looſe into the carriage, I peruſed it in my

way down hither, whilſt the Chevalier Bayar was more rationally employed with a volume of De Florian's poems."

"Well, uncle," cried Mrs. Powis, "and were you not charmed by the account of the delectable Sir Dennis O'Neil, and his more than half ſavage country?"

"Indeed, Emily," replied his Lordſhip, "I was not;—I could only lament that illiberality ſo very glaring, ſhould have found its way into the mind of a perſon capable of deſcribing "*The World as it is*," with ſo much pleaſantry and judgment in every other reſpect. And I am ſorry to ſee that you appreciate ſatire rather by its keenneſs than its juſtice."

"But

"But certainly, uncle," reſumed the lady, "you muſt, if you recollect for a moment ſome of the gallant Meleſians whom we ſaw at Bath the laſt ſeaſon we ſpent there, you muſt acknowledge there is ſome truth in the portrait the author has drawn of the deſcendant of the Hibernian Kings."

"It is not to the character of Sir Dennis O'Neil that I particularly object," returned Lord Somerſet; "we all know that in every nation on earth there are brutes, calling themſelves human creatures, whom nothing can civilize, even in the higher ranks of ſociety; and there are particular traits in the national character of the Iriſh, that, in an individual, may well bear to be heightened in ſuch a manner as to produce a very ludicrous, and at the ſame time a very like

caricature. But in the book of which we are ſpeaking, it is not only the proud ſavage, Sir Dennis, and the ſtill more ferocious Hector, that are held up to ridicule: had the author ſtopped at that point, it would do very well; but the general ſarcaſms, pointed with ſo little either of judgment or good-nature, at the whole nation, cannot fail to irritate every Iriſh perſon, and diſguſt every Engliſh one, who has either viſited the country, or has liberality enough to believe that, though from its later commencement in the arts of civilization, it may not be quite ſo far advanced in them as the ſiſter kingdom, it is certainly already in a very high ſtate of improvement, which is every day becoming more conſpicuous. The fair authoreſs, for I think it is written by a woman, of "The World as it is," ſeems to me

me to have heard, at ſome time or other, a moſt exaggerated account of the poverty and ſufferings of the Iriſh peaſantry, the inconveniences of travelling on Iriſh roads, and the air of neglect and ſloth viſible in Iriſh houſes. All this her memory has retained; but ſhe ſeems entirely to have forgotten whether thoſe grievances preſented themſelves in the domains of a bad landlord, or a good and humane one; whether in the mountainous tracts of Wicklow, the unfrequented wilds of Donegal, or on the great North road, which is, I have been told, fully equal to any England can boaſt, for goodneſs and accommodations of every ſort; and upon this ſame road does this lady preſent to her wandering heroine every horror of uncivilized Ireland!"

"But, my dear Sir," interrupted Mrs. Powis, "you muſt confeſs that there is at leaſt ample field for ridicule in their horrid, uncouth mode of ſpeaking the barbarous names they give places, the prejudices, and national pride of the Iriſh."

"I am ſorry, my dear Emily," returned Lord Somerſet, calmly and gravely, "to ſee you ſo little underſtand the terms you have made uſe of, Engliſh as they are, as I think otherwiſe you would not lay yourſelf ſo entirely open to the retort courteous. In regard to the Iriſh accent, which I acknowledge I have met ſcarcely any perſons of that country entirely free from, you muſt permit me to ſay I think it infinitely preferable to the provincial jargon of many Engliſh counties; becauſe the language is always good,

good, though the pronunciation may be faulty. As for the barbarous names you mention, for Heaven's ſake recollect thoſe of Cornwall, which is, in fact, your native country."

The Peer pauſed; but his niece remaining ſilent, he added—

"I confeſs I have no patience with the arrogant abſurdity one ſo often meets with in Novels, where the author criticizes and ridicules the language of the Iriſh, in a broad Yorkſhire, or Weſt country dialect."

"Yet, notwithſtanding all you have ſaid, my dear uncle," reſumed the fair widow, "I cannot believe but there muſt be much more truth than you are willing to allow in

this ſatire on the Iriſh; elſe would you ſee ſo many of that country, as you may do daily, evidently aſhamed of having been born on the other ſide of the Channel?"

"What you now mention," ſaid his Lordſhip, "has long ſtruck me as being a very great abſurdity, totally unworthy of the underſtanding of many perſons who one ſees cheriſh it; and it certainly gives infinite force to thoſe illiberal ſarcaſms, that would elſe only excite the contemptuous ſmile, and be forgotten. The Iriſh are alſo apt to run into a contrary extreme, in being vain of the title of Hibernians; and I have more than once met with Iriſh perſons in England, whoſe manners, and ſtill more their accent, were in the ſtyle of the moſt vulgar Mileſian's, whom I have afterwards ſeen

ſeen in the polite circles of Dublin, and who would there have bluſhed at the very idea of making uſe of an Hibernianiſm. But it is not of the natives of our ſiſter kingdom alone that this may be ſaid, ſince it uſed to be much too common in Paris, and is ſtill in the German and Italian States, to behold young Engliſhmen, who were ſent abroad to learn foreign manners, degrade themſelves by every vicious abſurdity, to prove that they had the "honour of Old England at heart;" and who, on their return home, exhibited the complete *travelled man*. Would the Iriſh in England, and the Engliſh on the Continent, neither arrogantly boaſt of, nor meanly bluſh for their country, they would in general be infinitely more reſpected than they are. In this they would do well to take example by their Northern neighbours,

neighbours, whoſe national pride has always appeared to me to be ſingularly well regulated."

The glance which Lord Somerſet, as he ſpoke, directed to the Chevalier Charles, made the alluſion ſufficiently evident to authorize that gentleman ſaying—

"Do you not, my Lord, give to the natives of the North of Europe more than their due ſhare of credit in this reſpect?—Sir Piercy Delville, who has ſpent ſo much of his time in Sweden, could give you many inſtances of the boaſting ſuperiority of Ruſſians; and before Poland was ſo cruelly diſmembered, the contempt in which the Poles held us: nay, even the Swedes themſelves

are much too vain-glorious concerning the heroes their country has produced."

"Believe me, my dear Bayar," returned his Lordſhip, "that is a ſort of national vanity I think too reaſonable ever to condemn or ridicule. Even I, though not a Swede, can never hear of your godlike Guſtavus Adolphus, your heroic Charles, without the moſt animated rapture; but which is not, I confeſs, quite equal to that which it gives me to contemplate the character and conduct of a man fully equal to the firſt, and far ſuperior to the laſt—I mean Guſtavus the Third."

"Though ſome of my family," ſaid Bayar, "if not active in oppoſing the Revolution, were at leaſt ſteady in the contrary intereſt,

intereſt, there is no perſon who more highly honours Guſtavus than myſelf. Had I, at that momentous period to Sweden, been of an age to aid the cauſe of my King by my exertions, they ſhould not have been wanting; but, as I was in my infancy at the time, I can now only venerate this memorial of the glorious nineteenth of Auguſt," looking down upon the band of muſlin that encircled his arm as he ſpoke, "which I eſteem as the badge of my principles, as well as of my ſervice."

The Chevalier, who ſtill conſidered himſelf as in the Swediſh ſervice while unemployed by any other Government, happened on this day to wear the Naval uniform of that country, and conſequently the badge of the Revolution, which Mrs. Powis had never

never before taken notice of; and now seeing the importance he annexed to it, demanded the occasion of its being worn.

Mrs. Powis had, at school, gone through the customary routine of geographical studies, and could, with a little recollection, tell, *verbatim* from Guthrie, with much precision, how every country was bounded, its latitude and longitude from London or Paris, principal rivers, &c.; but of the government, history, and customs of the European nations she was as ignorant as need be desired, and the perfect novelty of every thing she now heard, as the conversation turned on the celebrated old and new Constitution of Sweden, so highly interested and amused her, that, from that time the Chevalier's conversation became almost as much sought

by

by her, as that of the Count, who ſtill, however, remained her chief favourite.

Whilſt the family at Somerſet Caſtle, in their peaceful retirement, enjoy the pleaſures of the advancing ſummer, it may not be amiſs to give ſome account of a perſon, whoſe hiſtory, imperfectly known to Miſs Delville, gave that young lady a frequent pang, for the honour and happineſs of her beloved brother.

In the letter received by Lord Somerſet, from the lady calling herſelf Thereſa Meliphant Delville, there was ſuch a mixture of truth and falſehood as would have puzzled even Sir Piercy, ſadly convinced as he had been of her art and unworthineſs, to diſcriminate,

minate, and ſay preciſely what was fabricated, and what not.

Thereſa was, as ſhe had informed Lord Somerſet, the daughter of a Roman Catholic gentleman of conſiderable property in Ireland; but a natural one (as ſhe did not inform him) by a ruddy-cheeked damſel, the daughter of one of his pooreſt colliers, who aſſiſted the dairy-maid to milk the cows, and the kitchen-maid in her manifold labours, for the ſmall compenſation of the ſcraps left at the ſervants'-hall table, for herſelf and father; ſometimes accompanied by a ſhare for the pig, which at Chriſtmas and Eaſter ſupplied, by the money for which it ſold, the very ſmall portion of clothes that ſufficed this humble pair.

Polly

Polly (ſo the damſel was named) was, however, very pretty, and as vain as pretty girls uſually are, from the higheſt to the loweſt circles of females. Nor was this vanity alone gratified by the preſents of a new ſtuff gown, ſtraw hat, &c. made her by the Squire; for her pride was flattered in a ſtill higher degree, by having the honour of having a child by him—a circumſtance which is far from reflecting diſgrace, provided the father is of rank.

Mr. Meliphant certainly did hear of the birth of Polly's child, for he gave her a guinea to entertain her friends with at the chriſtening, and graciouſly permitted that it ſhould be called Thereſa, after his Honour's ſiſter, who was married to a gentleman living in Dublin; but he heard no more

of

of it till two years afterwards, when one morning his houſekeeper came into his room, to relate the terrible accident that had happened the night before, which was no other than the death of Polly's father, by a fall from the back of one of his Honour's cart-horſes, and the ſubſequent miſcarriage of Polly (who was in the way of preſenting his Honour with a ſecond bantling), which ſhe ſurvived ſcarcely more than an hour.

Mr. Meliphant declared he was very ſorry for honeſt Paddy and poor little Polly; and ſent the houſekeeper with a meſſage to his ſteward, commanding him to ſee that they were both properly waked and buried, at his expence; and, when reminded of the exiſtence of Thereſa, he alſo gave orders for the houſekeeper to bring her up to the houſe,

and

and teach her to knit and ſew, and make pies and paſties.

Had this rational mode of education been purſued, Thereſa would probably have made a clever and creditable ſervant; but it happened that when ſhe was about five years old, the houſekeeper (for Mr. Meliphant was a bachelor), on diſcharging one of the houſe-maids, hired another, who being very pretty, and very well behaved, ſhe made entirely her own companion, in order to keep her out of the way of their maſter.

Mr. Meliphant, however, contrived to get a glimpſe of Martha, the handſome houſe-maid, and it made him very frequent in his viſits to the houſekeeper's room, where only he could meet with her. In the courſe of

theſe

theſe viſits, little Thereſa rendered herſelf ſo engaging in the eyes of her father, that he became extremely fond of her, and would ſoon ſcarcely ſuffer her to be a moment out of his ſight; and it was in a ſhort time univerſally underſtood that he acknowledged her as his daughter, and meant to give her a fortune.

When Thereſa was about twelve years old, Mrs. Baldwin, the lady after whom ſhe had been named, came down to the country, on a viſit to her brother. She was pleaſed with the beauty and vivacity of her little nameſake, and being a very ſenſible woman, ſoon ſaw the impropriety of the manner in which her father was bringing her up, totally without education, and in habits of luxury and indulgence.

This,

This, Mrs. Baldwin conceived it, if poſſible, to be her duty to correct; and accordingly one day aſked her brother what he meant to do with Thereſa?

"Do with her?" repeated he.

"Yes, brother;—I mean, do you intend that ſhe ſhall, when a little older, appear in the world as Miſs Meliphant?"

"That ſhall be juſt as my wife pleaſes," anſwered the gentleman, with the utmoſt *ſang froid.*

Mr. Meliphant, now in his fortieth year, had always declared it to be his intention to marry ſome time or other; and though Mrs. Baldwin was of opinion that he would

live

live and die a bachelor, ſhe thought it beſt to provide againſt the chance of his making ſome lady his wife, who would not approve of his doing any thing for poor Thereſa; ſhe therefore ſet to work, with the utmoſt diligence, to improve the mind of the unfortunate child, in order, if poſſible, to fit her for a ſtation ſomething ſuperior to a ſervant, when it ſhould be the pleaſure of her father, or his wife, to caſt her upon the world unprovided for.

Mrs. Baldwin ſucceeded in the taſk ſhe had ſo benevolently undertaken, ſo far as to poliſh the manners of the young Thereſa, and to enlighten her underſtanding, but by no means to improve her mind: that was entirely degenerated, if the expreſſion may

be uſed for what had only been negatively good.

She had early learned from the ſervants all the mean arts of wheedling, to preſerve that influence over her father, which was often exerted to procure them indulgences, and to ſcreen them from his 'merited anger on many occaſions; and the advantages ſhe ſhe might now have derived from the attentions of the kind Mrs. Baldwin, were only ſhewn in her becoming more artful than ever, to conceal from her the depravity of her heart and ſentiments.

Five years after Mrs. Baldwin began her ſyſtem of education with Thereſa, Mr. Meliphant accompliſhed his long deſigned marriage, and united himſelf to a woman, vain, arrogant,

arrogant, and penurious, who, as his ſiſter had predicted, was ſcarcely ſettled in the houſe of her huſband, when ſhe inſiſted that his daughter ſhould leave it, and ſuggeſted the idea of ſending her to the Convent of St. Mary, at Baden, to be put under the care of Mr. Meliphant's relation, the Abbeſs.

Had Mr. Meliphant had any feeling, or any real regard for his daughter, which was very far from being the caſe, he certainly could not deny a requeſt made ſo early by his fair bride; and Thereſa was immediately conſigned to the care of the truly worthy woman, who preſided over the ſiſterhood of St. Mary.

About a year before the period now recorded, Thereſa had taken it into her head to be violently in love with one of her father's grooms; who, thinking it improbable that his maſter would ever marry, thought proper to fall in love too, and his young lady was eaſily prevailed upon to be united to him in the holy bands of wedlock.

No ſooner was her deſtination for Baden known to Thereſa, who may with more propriety be called Mrs. Fitzpatrick, than ſhe informed her huſband of it; telling him that he muſt now claim her from his maſter, as going abroad ſhe was poſitively determined againſt.

But

But Mr. Fitzpatrick, who had long ſince diſcovered that his lady was not likely to ſhare the fortune of the Squire, was already heartily tired of his bargain, and experienced the moſt lively pleaſure when he heard ſhe was "going to foreign parts to be made a Nun of," therefore no deſign whatever to comply with her injunctions; yet thinking he had better not irritate the lady by a denial, or any ſhew of indifference towards her perſon, determined to perform a very curious part: he broke into loud and impatient lamentations, curſed his own ill fortune, &c. and at laſt informed Mrs. Fitzpatrick that their marriage had not been lawful, ſince the ceremony had only been performed by Father Sulivan."

"Only!" repeated the young lady, "and what more would you have, Jerry Fitzpatrick?"

The wily Jerry now confeſſed, with much ſeeming ſorrow, that he was both an Engliſhman and a Proteſtant, conſequently could not be lawfully married by a Prieſt. Here Mr. Fitzpatrick did not adhere very ſtrictly to truth; for the next pariſh to Mr. Meliphant's bore in its regiſter the record of his birth; and all his kindred had, time immemorial, been ſheep of the fold of Father Sulivan, and his predeceſſors; nor had any form been wanting in the completion of his marriage, to entitle him to claim the fortune of his lady, had her father choſen to give her one.

Notwith-

Notwithſtanding Mrs. Fitzpatrick choſe violently to upbraid her lord and maſter for ſo long concealing the inefficacy of their marriage (not one word of which, however, did ſhe believe), ſhe was not by any means ſorry when ſhe found ſhe was to enter the world free from all matrimonial ties; and therefore made no objection to the journey to Baden, ſtipulating only that ſhe ſhould not be obliged to take the veil againſt her inclination, nor even enter on a noviciate for three months. To theſe preliminary articles Mr. Meliphant was too indifferent about his daughter to make any oppoſition, and Mrs. Meliphant had already ſeen enough of the young lady's diſpoſition to be perfectly aſſured that her huſband would never have the care of ſettling a permanent penſion on her; and, in order to ſave even a tem-

porary one, ſhe adviſed Mr. Meliphant to ſend Thereſa, for the firſt three months, *on a viſit* to her couſin, the Abbeſs.

In a few days, Mrs Fitzpatrick ſet out for Baden, and was in due time received at the Convent, with much cordiality by the good Superior. The ſordid deſire of Mrs. Meliphant for Thereſa to be only a viſiter at St. Mary's, was not more favourable to her own ſecret wiſhes than it was to the deſigns of the young lady herſelf; as a viſiter, the Abbeſs had no right to controul her inclinations or actions for three months, which time ſhe would have to try the power of her wits and her charms, towards procuring herſelf a comfortable eſtabliſhment; and even after that, ſhould her father inſiſt on her commencing Novice, ſhe had no doubt of

intereſting

intereſting the Abbeſs by her flatteries, when they were evidently ſpontaneous, to indulge her in greater liberty than is generally allowed to ſiſters of any deſcription. At all events, ſhe knew ſhe could not be forced to take the veil, even ſhould Mr. Meliphant be unmindful of his promiſe; as the validity of her marriage ſhe knew ſhe could eaſily prove, ſhould it be convenient.

CHAP. VIII.

"The charm, which could be formed only by guilt, has power only to produce misery."

HAWKESWORTH.

IT was about a month after the arrival of the fair Thereſa at Baden, that ſhe firſt became acquainted with young Delville, at the houſe of an Engliſh merchant of much reſpectability in that city. This gentleman, whoſe name was Marley, had a daughter, young, amiable, and paſſionately beloved by him; who, from often viſiting an old

old relation of her mother's, a profeſſed ſiſter at St. Mary's, formed an intimacy with Thereſa, which led to her being allowed frequently to viſit the worthy merchant's houſe. A friendſhip, ſincere on one ſide, thence enſued, which was evinced by Miſs Marley by the moſt unlimited confidence in Thereſa, who was too artful to give her more than the ſemblance of it in return.

When Mr. Delville arrived at Baden, he immediately waited on Mr. Marley, to whom he had letters from ſeveral friends, and was treated by him with the kindeſt attention; while the innocent and ſuſceptible Caroline Marley gave to his merits, on a few days' acquaintance, a larger portion of regard than was conſiſtent with her own happineſs, ſince totally unnoticed by Mr. Delville.

Deceived, notwithſtanding, by her own ſenſations, the ſimple girl gave a meaning to his attentions (which were merely thoſe which every man of feeling and taſte ſhews to every pleaſing woman); which he never deſigned them to wear the appearance of; and at her next viſit at the Convent, ſhe related to Thereſa all her hopes, her wiſhes, and the whole hiſtory of Mr. Delville, which ſhe had learned from her father.

Here was ample field for the exertion of all Mrs. Fitzpatrick's genius, and ſhe reſolved to profit by it. She congratulated Miſs Marley on her conqueſt, and expreſſed a tender wiſh to be known to the man who had ſo ſoon captivated the heart of her beloved Caroline.

The innocent girl, delighted at the feigned participation in her happineſs, directly procured permiſſion from the Abbeſs for Thereſa to dine with her that day; and Miſs Meliphant was in form introduced to Piercy Delville. That young man certainly, from the firſt, admired her extremely; but would probably have thought no more of her from the moment ſhe was out of his ſight, had ſhe not taken infinite pains to engage his affections, which ſhe very ſoon did in ſome degree.

The credulous Caroline, in the meantime, flattered herſelf ſhe was every day advancing nearer to happineſs, in the increaſing love of Delville; for ſo cruelly deceptive was the conduct of the unprincipled Thereſa, that ſhe perſuaded the unhappy Miſs Marley

that

that the frequent whiſpering and private conferences, which ſhe could not avoid obſerving, were entirely owing to Delville's concealed love for her amiable friend.

In endeavouring to enſnare the affections of the young Piercy, immediate marriage was never any view of Mrs. Fitzpatrick's. From her firſt converſation with him, in which ſhe artfully led him to ſpeak of his family, ſhe was certain that to lead him into marrying without the conſent of Lord Somerſet, would not be an eaſy matter; but ſhe ſaw that a punctilious honour was the marking trait of his character, and, could ſhe once enſnare him ſo far as to engage it in her cauſe, ſhe knew ſhe was ſecure of ſucceſs.

She therefore contrived to draw him into ſituations, in which it was next to impoſſible to avoid the ſnare ſhe had laid for his honour; and then artfully deploring her own ſuſceptibility, and gently reproaching him, the ſincerely repentant Delville upbraided himſelf for the undoing of Miſs Meliphant, when in fact he had been moſt cruelly and cunningly ſeduced into error.

It is thus often that men, deceived and betrayed by their own vanity, regret, but more commonly exult in, their ſucceſſes with women, whoſe dupes they are; and fancy themſelves the ſubject of envy to all who know them, when in fact they are univerſally pitied for their deluſion.

It is this vanity which ſhews us ſo many men, of whom the world ſpeaks, to uſe the words of the author of the Gameſter, "as of a good man, dead!—as one who, walking in his ſleep, fell down a precipice!"

Delville was now ſunk in his own eyes; he conſidered himſelf as the ſeducer of a young lady, lovely, amiable, and innocent; and believing he owed her every reparation in his power, gave her a ſolemn promiſe to repair her loſs of honour as ſoon as he ſhould be his own maſter. The firſt thing that awoke this ill-fated youth to a conception of the ſelfiſh views of the lady, was her deſiring to have this promiſe in writing; a gratification he would not deny her, as he conſidered that it could make no bond between them more firm than his verbal declarations.

In

In the whole of his tour through the German States, Thereſa accompanied her lover, and at length returned to London with him, where he procured her lodgings, but where he ſeldom viſited her, and always accompanied by a friend; as there was nothing he dreaded more than renewing the connection with her, which had been for ſome time broken off.

Mr. Fitzpatrick, in the meantime, well pleaſed to be diſincumbered of his lady, continued for ſome months to attend the horſes of his father-in-law, when the latter gentleman died, leaving his daughter Thereſa five hundred pounds, to be immediately tranſmitted to her. Jerry Fitzpatrick's heart yearned to poſſeſs this money, but wards Mrs. Fitzpatrick it did not

and as he had diſcovered that ſhe was kept by a young Engliſhman of rank and fortune, he determined that ſhe ſhould either quietly give up the legacy to him, or be obliged to live with him, which he well knew ſhe would ſooner die than be compelled to do. Accordingly, as ſoon as he was certain of her arrival in London, he waited upon her; and at once letting her into the ſecret of the validity of their marriage, and propoſing terms to her, demanded the five hundred pounds.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick would willingly have given the money, had it been forth-coming; but it had been ſpent long before, and ſo ſhe ld him. Jerry, upon this, inſiſted that ſhould procure a like ſum from her which was a meaſure ſhe did not wiſh

to

to adopt; and therefore uſed her beſt endeavours to pacify Mr. Fitzpatrick, ſhewing him, as a proof he had beſt hold his tongue for the preſent, the promiſe of marriage ſhe had obtained from Delville, which was ſo worded as to render it impoſſible for him to break the engagement.

Unfortunately, however, for Mrs. Fitzpatrick, Delville was in an adjoining room during this converſation, of which he loſt not a ſingle word; and now calmly entering the apartment in which they were, ſeized the promiſe of marriage, and commenced his operations by very deliberately holding it in the fire till it was conſumed. He then turned to Thereſa, with a ſtern countenance, ſaying—

"The

"The paper, Madam, which I have now deſtroyed, I always felt to be perfectly uſeleſs, ſince it would require no bond to compel me to perform a promiſe once ſolemnly made; but from the inſight you have, during the laſt half hour, given me into your character, I thought it a meaſure inconſiſtent with the ſafety of your huſband, to permit you to retain an engagement of that nature.—You have long, Madam, upbraided me with coldneſs; but aſſure yourſelf that, although my heart ſunk and recoiled at the very thought of ſuch an union, I would religiouſly have kept my word.—From my ſoul I thank you for ſhewing me the propriety of breaking thoſe engagements which have for ſeveral months made me miſerable. Mr. Fitzpatrick," added Delville, turning to the huſband, "you are entitled, in right of this lady,

lady, to five hundred pounds, which ſhe has ſpent; here is an order for that ſum, which my agent for prize-money gave me this morning: take it, Sir, with my good wiſhes, and take your wife alſo from hence. Mrs. Fitzpatrick, you muſt inſtantly depart; your clothes ſhall be ſent to any place you direct; but the ornamental trinkets, I have at different times preſented you, I ſhall not ſend. Two hundred pounds is conſiderably more than their original coſt; that ſum you ſhall have, but no pledges of my folly and your duplicity ſhall remain with you.—Good morning, Madam."

As Delville pronounced the laſt word, he took Thereſa's hand, and firmly graſping it, led her down ſtairs, followed by Jerry. His carriage waited at the door, and handing the

the lady into it, he told her it ſhould carry her whither ſhe pleaſed to go; he then left her to her meditations, and returned up ſtairs.

He did not however ſtay long. He obtained from Mrs. Fitzpatrick's maid the trinkets he deſired to have, and giving her five guineas for herſelf, he ſealed her lady's trunks to be ſent her, and diſcharged the lodgings, determined to end at once this very diſagreeable buſineſs. The carriage conveyed the fair Thereſa to an hotel, where ſhe deſired her trunks to be ſent; and Delville ſaw or heard no more of the wretched woman herſelf, as he left town in two days.

But notwithſtanding he had, with a ſteadineſs extraordinary at his time of life, and

which

which only the precepts of ſuch a man as Lord Somerſet could have given birth to, freed himſelf for ever from the artful ſpell that had ſo long caſt a gloom on his proſpects, Delville adverted not to the enterpriſing and malicious ſpirit he had rouſed when he gave Mrs. Fitzpatrick her *congée*, and troubled himſelf no further about her. It never once entered his imagination that ſhe would dare to intrude her infamous tale upon his father, which, with all a diſappointed woman's rage, ſhe immediately reſolved to do; but ſome other little intrigues that fell in her way, and induced her to leave England for a time, delayed her purpoſe for nearly two years; nay, it was probable might have delayed it for ever, had ſhe not had an opportunity of diſcovering his attachment to Miſs Hennington, during the

the ſhort time that intervened between Delville's finding her in London, and the death of her brother.

Her knowledge of the circumſtances that occurred at that time, ſhe owed to her being, though ſhe carefully concealed herſelf from Sir Piercy, a lodger in the ſame houſe with the Lieutenant and his ſiſter.—When Delville and his fair charge left town, the malignant ſpirit of Thereſa, thirſting for miſchief and revenge, prompted her to follow them privately into Yorkſhire, where ſhe found it even eaſier than ſhe had expected, to gain intelligence of all the movements of Sir Piercy.

Often had this foul fiend hovered over the morning walks of the guileleſs inhabitants of

of the caſtle, and liſtened to the converſation of Serena and Delville, when, ſeparating themſelves from the reſt of the party, they would talk of paſt times, of Hennington, and anticipate the future.

The malicious eye of Thereſa, almoſt immediately after her arrival in Yorkſhire, diſcovered the growing ſize of Miſs Hennington, and directly concluded the child ſhe bore was Delville's. In forming this concluſion, ſhe was however often at a loſs, for ſhe frequently heard Delville make uſe of expreſſions that ſeemed to allude to ſome other perſon as the favoured lover of his charge; but as ſhe never could bear to pronounce the name of Delamain, ſhe never could inform herſelf who that perſon was. It, however, ſuited her convenience to at-

tribute the ſeduction of Miſs Hennington to Sir Piercy; and having once, in one of her prowling viſits to the caſtle grounds, overheard Delville ſtrongly urging the Count de Melanville on the neceſſity of keeping the promiſe of ſecrecy they had all made concerning Miſs Hennington, ſhe no longer heſitated to begin her operations upon Lord Somerſet.

Thereſa was not miſtaken in ſuppoſing that the atrocity of his ſon's conduct, in ſeducing a young creature bequeathed to his care by her dying protector, would render Lord Somerſet credulous in believing him capable of every other act of depravity; but the greater evil ſwallowed up the leſſer, and he gave himſelf very little concern about the wrongs of Mrs. Fitzpatrick: and could

he,

he, in his own mind, have cleared his beloved Piercy of the charge of ſeducing his ward, he would probably have never mentioned Thereſa to him, but to enforce their final ſeparation, by engaging him to give his hand to Serena.

CHAP. IX.

ON leaving the caſtle, Sir Piercy Delville directly haſtened to London, where, finding Lord Somerſet had returned to Yorkſhire, he made every enquiry concerning a ſhip bound for Sweden; but finding none, and unable to endure inactivity, he took poſt for Devonſhire, determined to enter a volunteer on board the Engliſh fleet then in Torbay; but when he reached that place, he heard that a Swediſh frigate had put into a neighbouring harbour for ſome repairs, and was every hour

hour expected to ſail for Carlſcrona. He immediately haſtened on board her, and found, in the Captain, an old friend, who received him as a Lieutenant, there being one wanting in the ſhip, and with the next tide they departed from England.

To account for Sir Piercy not receiving Lord Somerſet's letter, it muſt be ſaid that it was directed to him at his Lordſhip's town houſe, which Delville never entered. He called at the door the night he arrived in London, but finding his father not there, he had driven to an hotel, and went thither no more before he ſet out for Devonſhire.

Time wore peaceably away for ſeveral days at Somerſet Caſtle. Miſs Delville daily

viſited the ſuffering Serena, whoſe health ſlowly returned, though any converſation that might agitate her was ſtrictly prohibited by her phyſician for ſome time longer; and it was therefore concealed from her that there was very little likelihood of her ſon recovering from the ſmall-pox.

Once Lord Somerſet accompanied his daughter to the cottage, meaning to ſee Serena, and aſſure her of his continued protection; but he was not allowed to be introduced to her, nor to have his name mentioned in her preſence: for the phyſician not entertaining the ſlighteſt doubt of her connection, by marriage or otherwiſe, with young Delville, thought it could not fail to diſturb her ſpirits to ſee or hear from his father. His Lordſhip, however, had the little

little boy brought to him by Philippa. It was ſwelled and disfigured, by its diſtemper, to a frightful degree; and the good Peer ſhuddered as he looked on it, and enquired how it had been named.

"Piercy Delville," replied Philippa, afraid to ſuppreſs the truth, yet dreading the inference that would be drawn from it.

Lord Somerſet ſighed as he ſaid he would provide for it.

"Your Lordſhip's care on that head will ſoon be needleſs," ſaid the phyſician, who was preſent; "the infant will ſcarcely live till morning."

The Peer ſighed again; and Miſs Delville, who was extremely fond of the child, could not refrain from tears as ſhe carried it up ſtairs to its nurſe.

On their return home, Lord Somerſet mentioned to his daughter how much concerned he was at not hearing from her brother. Miſs Delville hinted the probability that he had left town before it reached him, though ſhe could not conceive why he had not written, as he had reſolved to do, to his father, to place Serena's boy under his protection.

"At all events, Sir," added the amiable girl, "Serena will, when ſhe is well enough to be ſpoken to on the ſubject, exonerate Delville from all cenſure."

"I

"I hope ſo," ſaid the worthy man, and entered the library; for this converſation had paſſed in the hall.

A few days after this, as Mrs. Powis was giving an account, at dinner, of a viſit ſhe had paid a neighbouring family that morning, ſhe mentioned a Miſs Mortimer, juſt arrived from London, with whom ſhe appeared quite captivated.

"I aſked Mrs. Morton," continued Mrs. Powis, "how ſhe became acquainted with ſo charming a creature; and ſhe told me ſhe had met her at Mrs. William Morton's, in Lancaſhire, and invited her hither."

"Is this Miſs Mortimer handſome?" enquired Miſs Delville.

"Dear Philly, how can you aſk ſuch a queſtion?" retorted the fair widow; "did you ever know me profeſs a friendſhip for an ugly woman in my life?"

"Oh, your pardon!" cried Miſs Delville; "I did not know you had formed a friendſhip with Miſs Mortimer."

"Then I aſſure you I have," returned Mrs. Powis; "and if neither you nor my uncle will find it unpleaſant, mean to invite her next week to ſpend a few days here."

"You know, my dear Emily," ſaid Lord Somerſet, "that, by agreement, you are to conſider this houſe as your own, and I ſhall, on your account, be happy to ſee Miſs Mortimer in it; though I cannot, with

the facility that you do, form a friendſhip with her, whilſt in total ignorance of her character and diſpoſition."

"I am confident you will be charmed with her," ſaid Mrs. Powis, with a ſatisfied air, and roſe from table.

The Count had of late been in the habit of attending her in her evening walk; but at preſent he happened to be deeply engaged in relating ſome circumſtances that had lately occurred in Paris, to Miſs Delville, and he did not obſerve the ſort of heſitating ſtop made at the door by the fair widow. The Chevalier Bayar, however, ſaw it, and riſing, deſired permiſſion to walk with her. Miſs Delville forgot that De Melanville was ſpeaking to her, and ſighed, when Mrs.

Powis taking the Chevalier's arm, they left the room together.

"Ah!" thought Xavier, "how bleſſed ſhould I be, had I the power to draw forth ſuch a ſigh; but not for worlds would I give the lovelieſt of women cauſe for it!"

In a few minutes Lord Somerſet gaily noticed the defection of his niece, and the Chevalier, and invited the Count to accompany him in a ſtroll, thence giving Miſs Delville an opportunity of going to the cottage to ſee Serena, and enquire if the fate of her little boy was yet decided."

Contrary to her expectation, ſhe found the latter yet alive; and as the criſis of the diſorder

diſorder had been favourable, there was a probability that he would finally recover.

This intelligence, for Miſs Delville was very fond of the boy, gave an air of ſatisfaction to her countenance as ſhe entered Serena's room, which that young lady immediately obſerved, and while ſhe congratulated her upon it, enquired whence it aroſe.

Miſs Delville, fearful of agitating her yet feeble friend, made an evaſive anſwer; and Serena, taking her hand, ſaid ſeriouſly—

"I obſerve, my dear Philippa, that of late you ſhun all converſation of an intereſting nature; and I have thus long ſubmitted to remain in ignorance of much that

that I wiſh to know, becauſe I ſaw it was painful to you to deceive, or to evade my enquiries. Now, however, that my health is in ſome meaſure reſtored, you muſt no longer refuſe to ſatisfy me reſpecting the ſtate of your family. Is it not true that, two days ago, I ſaw Lord Somerſet arrive at, and leave this habitation?"

Miſs Delville replied in the affirmative, and Serena reſumed.

"Am I miſtaken in ſuppoſing he knows who is its preſent ſad tenant?"

"I cannot tell you an untruth, Serena; he certainly does."

"Ah

"Ah then," cried the unhappy invalid, "he came hither to upbraid me for having deſtroyed the peace of his only ſon!—that ſon, ſo amiable, ſo truly worthy—who, holding out his hand to ſave a miſerable creature from inevitable deſtruction, received a dagger in his heart from the ingrate!"

"Be at peace, my beloved Serena," returned Miſs Delville, "and all may yet be well.—My father, who has been perſuaded, by ſome malicious fiend, that you are the victim of the artifices of his ſon, impatiently wiſhes to be permitted to ſee, and aſſure you of his paternal regard and care for you."

"Oh!" exclaimed Serena, with animation, "let him come then!—Let Lord Somerſet but deign to liſten to my ſad ſtory, and

and let him acknowledge the matchleſs worth of Delville!—But, alas! to me nothing can now bring happineſs—the man I ſo truly love, an exile for my ſake, and feeling myſelf bound by ties, undefinable to myſelf, to a man whoſe treachery I abhor, and whoſe preſence, even in my dreams, is hateful to me."

Miſs Delville, extremely aſtoniſhed to hear Serena mention a knowledge of Sir Piercy having left England, impatiently demanded how ſhe learned ſuch intelligence; and was referred for an anſwer to a letter Serena had, about an hour before, received, which ſhe now gave to her, and which ſhe perceived was from Mr. Delamain.

" TO MADAME D'ALBAIN.

" From the bed of ſickneſs and pain I addreſs my Serena, though ſcarcely knowing in what character. Not in that of a huſband, for it has been baneful to you, and rendered me accurſed;—not in that of a lover, for I have claims on you, that would render it a mockery to act as if independent. But let us leave thoſe diſtinctions to more fortunate beings; and do you permit me to appeal to your feelings, and your ſenſe of juſtice, for a deciſion in my favour on the point neareſt my heart.

" Upwards of three years ſince, Serena Hennington, with the moſt engaging frankneſs, declared ſhe loved me, and conſented to entruſt to me the future happineſs of her life. I fondly received the dear depoſit, and, to my

my utmoſt, endeavoured to prevent your wiſhes, and guard your peace; and ſhould have done ſo ſtill, had not the wretched woman, who bore my name as my wife, added to her other injuries that of making you unhappy. When the authority of your deceaſed brother ſeparated us, I was taking every meaſure to have our union rendered permanent. He devolved to Sir Piercy Delville the taſk of dividing us, and well has he hitherto acquitted himſelf!—You, too, Serena, have aided the injuſtice, becauſe you love your guardian;—but can you think now of indulging that love?—Conſider what effect it will have on the future proſpects of your ſon, and you cannot oppoſe a re-union with his father!—Even Delville tacitly owns that ſuch ſhould be your proceeding.—He has left England,

which

which proves that he no more desires to interfere betwixt us. He evidently acknowledges that the interest of your boy requires that you should be known as my wife; yet disdaining to influence your decision where he has no legal right, he abandons even the possibility of a contest, and flies to engage himself in a foreign service, the more effectually to prevent your appeal to him, who has no voice in the affair.

"Serena, you are, and you must be mine!—Your own honour, the interests of your son demand that you should confirm yourself Mrs. Delamain—a name you ought never to have given up; since, long before I knew you, the ill conduct of Honora Seward had disunited us in the eyes of Justice and Reason!

"I am

"I am at preſent too ill to venture to leave my bed, but the firſt moment of returning health ſhall be devoted to pleading my cauſe with my Serena.—She muſt not refuſe to pardon and accept her ever devoted,

"H. DELAMAIN."

Skipton.

The aſtoniſhment with which Miſs Delville peruſed this moſt extraordinary letter, was ſo great as to preclude all comments upon it for ſome time. Had ſhe been totally unintereſted in its contents, it would have been ſurpriſing to her that any man, under ſuch circumſtances, could write ſuch a letter to the victim of his barbarous duplicity; but the inconſiſtent ſtyle of it too ſtrongly

ſtrongly marked the character of the writer, for her not to dread for her friend falling into his power.

In the commencement, the inſidious arts of the betrayer were ſupported in a manner worthy of Mr. Delamain; but his ungovernable pride, his haughtineſs of ſpirit, broke forth towards the end; and the abrupt manner of its concluſion ſhewed to the calm and reaſonable Miſs Delville the abſolute neceſſity that Serena ſhould be on her guard not only againſt fraud, but force. For very evident reaſons, however, the aſſertion of Mr. Delamain by no means convinced her that Sir Piercy had left England; ſince the man who could ſuppreſs and diſtort the truth, as he had done, could ſcarcely be ſuppoſed to heſitate at fabricating a down-

right

right falſehood, when it could ſo materially forward his views.

The conduct Miſs Delville ought now to purſue, appeared to her very difficult to decide on. It ſeemed abſolutely neceſſary that Serena ſhould underſtand how very much Mr. Delamain had, in his letter, miſrepreſented the ſentiments and declarations of Delville; yet it was impoſſible to convince her of his falſehood, without informing her of the cauſe of his preſent confinement; and there was every probability that hearing the life of Sir Piercy had been endangered in her cauſe, would give her a ſhock ſufficient to deſtroy her ſcarcely recovered health and intellects.

After a ſilence of ſome minutes, Miſs Delville heſitatingly demanded of Serena how

how ſhe meant to act in regard to Mr. Delamain.

"I have not yet determined," anſwered the fair recluſe, "and ſhall take ſome time to deliberate.—Not only my ſtrength of body," ſhe continued, "is impaired by my illneſs, but I find even what energy of mind I once poſſeſſed, almoſt ſubdued. I at preſent ſee but one mode of extricating Sir Piercy from the fatal ſpell I have drawn around him—Oh God! perhaps of preſerving his life!"

Serena pronounced the laſt words with a wildneſs that made Miſs Delville fear a return of her delirium, and more forcibly than ever ſhewed her the impropriety of letting her know any thing of the meeting between Delville and Mr. Delamain. She therefore did

did all in her power to ſooth her; and adviſing mature deliberation before ſhe took any ſtep towards re-uniting herſelf with her betrayer, Philippa at length ſucceeded in reſtoring her friend to ſome ſhare of compoſure, and then returned home, fully determined to aſk her father to accompany her on the morrow to Serena, that he might be made acquainted with that young lady's ſtory, and afford her his advice and protection in her preſent difficulty. In this view ſhe was however diſappointed; for on the following day Lord Somerſet had a return of a rheumatic complaint to which he was ſubject, which confined him to the houſe, and Miſs Delville with him, as, when ill, he could never bear to have her abſent a ſingle hour.

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END OF VOL. II.

LANE, MINERVA-PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET.